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SER'S REASONS  
*By*  
ELIZABETH MARSH

1. E. W. - 1914 - Drama ✓

2. Dramatic )

3. William H. - Drama

4. Frederick W. Drama

Marsh.

BTZ1







# **THE KAISER'S REASONS**





# THE KAISER'S REASONS

*A Drama in Three Acts*  
*With Interludes*

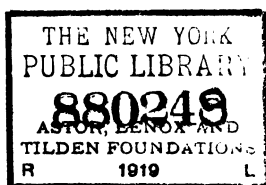
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ELIZABETH MARSH



NEW YORK  
DUFFIELD & COMPANY  
1918

L. 11.





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VIA AIR  
JULY  
1918

*To all the guides of my youth:  
especially to  
my father and mother.*



# **THE KAISER'S REASONS**

**A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS  
WITH INTERLUDES**



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

KAISER WILHELM II

FREDERICK THE GREAT

GENERAL VON FALKENHAYN, *Minister of War*

ADMIRAL VON TIRPITZ, *State Secretary of the Admiralty*

EMIL RATHENAU, *Railway and Bank Director*

RAOUL DE FORTA, *A Captain of the Belgian Life Guards*

VOLTAIRE, *French Poet and Philosopher*

BOTTA, *The Austrian Ambassador*

PLUTO, *A Dancing Blackamoor*

AN AMERICAN POET CAPTAIN

AN AMERICAN BANKER LIEUTENANT

MARIA THERESA, *Queen of Hungary and Archduchess of Austria*

YOLANDE DE MALINES, *The Daughter of a Belgian Count*

TWO SPIRITS ARMED



SCENE:—*A small officer's dugout. Two communication trenches run from it—one to the first line batteries, the other to an observation post. POET CAPTAIN and BANKER LIEUTENANT sit smoking.*

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

[*Relighting his pipe.*] What you've told me settles it for good and all. [*Takes a long puff.*] You ought never to have been here.

POET CAPTAIN.

[*Looking into the muzzle of his automatic.*] Oh yes, I ought. You forget I went in for Mathematics when I was in college.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

[*Chuckling.*] The deuce you did. You seem to have forgotten how we used to guy and gas you for it. Do you remember your innocent remark that you took Mathematics for the poetry in them?

POET CAPTAIN.

[*Scowling a little.*] If I hadn't had the Poetry plus the Mathematics, I might not have been handling this battery here tonight. It's the Poetry, after all that actually got me here.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Blest if I know what got me here—beyond longing  
to kick the Kaiser, of course.

POET CAPTAIN.

Nonsense, you always did the square thing.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

You mean by that, I was always kicked into some kind  
of a squad.

POET CAPTAIN.

Yes, squads have a way of being square.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

You fellows that have got it. . . .

POET CAPTAIN.

Got what?

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Vision. . . . You don't know what it is to be without  
it. I'd never have gone in for banking if I'd had what  
you've got.

POET CAPTAIN.

Shucks! I have an unforgettable recollection of your writing your class play—your class and mine.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

That was the most monstrous joke of my time. Of course, I did have the gift of gab. I've got it to this day. If I'd had your vision, the world would have listened to me—as it will to you some day.

POET CAPTAIN.

[*Shakes his head.*] No. I have the “*vision*” that this engagement tonight is going to do me in.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Then why the devil did you come? You could have stuck it out here as a war correspondent . . . at least till you'd got this play poem, this thing you've just told me . . . got it into cold type.

POET CAPTAIN.

[*Shaking his head.*] It's a good-sized play poem, you see. It takes in the major part of my whole experience as a war correspondent. Getting it into cold type. [*Shakes his head again.*] No, there wasn't time.

[*Telephone rings. With his ear to the receiver.*] Yes, sir. Yes, Colonel, that's what I *understood*. Yes, I *have* the listening post in communication. Yes, sir, we *are* expecting events about eleven. Yes, sir, the range cards are furnished to all guns. [*Pause.*] Yes, sir, I'll see to that at once. They have already had those orders. Yes, I'll see to that at once, sir. [*Hangs up receiver, and takes it down again.*] Send me the Company First Sergeant at once. [*Hangs up. Silence a moment. The CAPTAIN looks at the LIEUTENANT with folded arms.*] A question of the special crews for the two Maxims.

[ENTER COMPANY FIRST SERGEANT. *Salutes and stands at attention.*]

POET CAPTAIN.

Sergeant, I have just told the Colonel, that the packing on both Maxims is in condition. Is everything as it was twenty minutes ago? How about Number Two? Still O. K.?

SERGEANT.

Yes, sir, that Maxim is a perfect lady. I wish every one in the battery was like her.

POET CAPTAIN.

How would you like a twelve-inch Browning?

SERGEANT.

I prefer thé ladies, sir.

POET CAPTAIN.

Mind you pussyfoot it in your waders, and if promotion means anything to you, don't let there be any splashing. There's liable to be a night operation, in less than twenty minutes.

SERGEANT.

Yes, sir, the men suspect it. I told 'em all they need is to hold their blasted mouths open. . . . Righto in the presence of ladies.

POET CAPTAIN.

That's all right, Sergeant. If you're as fit as you were twenty minutes ago, . . . well, we'll make history spin.

SERGEANT.

I hope so, sir.

POET CAPTAIN.

That's all, Sergeant. Good-night, and good luck.

[SERGEANT *salutes and goes out.*

Good luck. It's an enigmatical term.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

I wonder what you'd have done, if you'd had what they called my good luck?

POET CAPTAIN.

Blown it in, perhaps, as you did. I never had any good luck. I had "vision."

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

You're an ungrateful hound. It's the one thing that makes a dog's life worth living. And you got it, and got it good and square, and never had to pay any price, so far.

POET CAPTAIN.

Oh, yes, I did. I've paid the price. . . . While you were settling your breach of promise suit I was falling in love with a woman . . . a real one.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Well, that's your cursed luck, again. I've tried to fall.  
But I couldn't see it.

POET CAPTAIN.

Falling isn't everything.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Well?

POET CAPTAIN.

I've no right to suppose that she cares for me.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

You mean to say you came away without having an  
understanding with her?

POET CAPTAIN.

*[Getting up and pacing in his narrow space.]* Of  
course, I mean it.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

You ass, that was the time to take her. You never looked any job so well as this. Women will do anything for a cartridge belt.

POET CAPTAIN.

Oh, she had half a dozen cartridge belts, all wanting to noose her. I'm not any different from any of her Tom, Dick and Harry friends, that have come over here. She's not that kind of woman.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

[*Puffing long.*] Oh!

POET CAPTAIN.

My play poetry could have got her, if I had published any big enough to present her with.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

This play poem you've just reeled off is big enough for one generation.

POET CAPTAIN.

But I shall not live to write it . . . perhaps.



BANKER LIEUTENANT.

If I could once *see* it, as you've told it to me, I could write it myself. I'm blind, but I've got the gift of gab. I wasn't class poet for nothing.

POET CAPTAIN.

Which means that if the shrapnel gets me . . . that maybe you'll write it. Will you, old man?

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

No. I said I'd have to *see* it, as you saw it.

POET CAPTAIN.

Well, maybe if the shrapnel, or whatever it is that'll get me . . . maybe . . . [*Fumbles sheepishly in his pocket.*] . . . maybe you'll take her back this little white veil. It has her name and address on the envelope. I put it in. [*Takes it out a moment.*]

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

[*Chewing his pipe.*] Of course I will.

POET CAPTAIN.

[*Putting it back in his pocket.*] I asked her for it. If I'd had my new unpublished volume, and especially

this play to show her . . . embodying my whole experience as a war correspondent . . . I'd have asked for more.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

The devil you would! And you'd have got it, too.  
[*Long pause.*]

POET CAPTAIN.

If the German guns get me they'll get the play poem, too.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Maybe not. . . . You know I've been thinking.

POET CAPTAIN.

Thinking what?

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

They say some of this German gas makes you see things.

POET CAPTAIN.

Yes, I've heard there is a kind that does.

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Perhaps if I get a touch of German gas I'd see all this magnificence of yours that you've told me . . . see it as you saw it. What price German gas, eh?

POET CAPTAIN.

What price German gas. [*Silence. Then a big burst of artillery. CAPTAIN rushes toward trench communicating with observation post. LIEUTENANT rushes to the trench communicating with battery. CAPTAIN turns back and seizes the telephone. Shouts.*] Hello! Gas masks for the battery! [*Both struggle with their masks. CAPTAIN rushes through communication.*]

BANKER LIEUTENANT.

Good luck, old man! [*A pause in the roar.*] What the hell! I say, old man, I'm seeing things!

[*Thick smoke, roaring, and darkness. Then the chiming of bells, through the smoke, which finally reveals a Belfry in Berlin, through whose arches clouds of the night drift by, concealing and revealing the stars, and also disclosing, time and again, the face of the POET, gazing steadfastly through the central arch of the belfry. On either side of the arch stand two SPIRITS, crowned each with a star, and armed: the one on the left, with*

*a sword in a shining sheath, the one on the right,  
with a broken reed held in his uplifted hand.  
Chimes, discernible high in the belfry, are peal-  
ing Christmas carols, and the voices of children  
echo them, in the street far below. At length they  
cease.*

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

And so, again, I meet thee, face to face.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Fear you my face?

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

Fear! I, the Pride of Life!

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Yea, me, the Meekness and Humility  
Of Death. Fear, have you still no fear of me?

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

I, dayspring of the heart of kings, to blench!

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

At me, who moan as every sparrow falls.

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

I, Lucifer, Son of the Morning, fear!

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Yea, me, a Star not seen of all in the East.  
How often have we thus appeared.

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

Too oft!

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Each unto each. And you've no fear of me?

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

A spade, when does it fear to break the grave  
It overturns?

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Three days in grave I lay.

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

Three days.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

And yet I live. Have you no fear?

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

I fear you not, because you live to die.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

As every life that lives.

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

[*Crying out.*]

'Nay, nay!

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Yea, yea!

How long through ages, must you learn there are  
Two ways to live, and both are ways to die.  
Behold I stand at each man's door and knock,  
With this my reed.

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

And I shall deafen him,  
Unsheathed this my sword. Think not that you  
Shall baffle me.

## SPIRIT OF THE REED.

On this momentous night.

## SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

This night, here, in this paltry capital  
Shall come to pass, a thing to shake the world.  
A new-made king shall make his choice, 'twixt thee  
And me.

## SPIRIT OF THE REED.

And so through ages, curse the world.

## SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

Through ages wilt thou seek again, and seek  
To save the cursed world?

## SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Behold I stand  
At each man's door, and knock.

## CHORUS OF CHILDREN.

Christ is born in wood of stall,  
Christ is born to die for all,  
Born to die on wood was he,  
Died to live eternally.

## SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

*[Strikes the air with his sword.]*

I, Lucifer, match might with impotence,  
Again and yet again. 'Tis I, who wreak  
Thy death. I, in my pride of life, 'tis I,  
Through bright eternity, who break thy reed,  
Like winds of ice, smite down thy broken reed,

*[Strikes the broken reed.]*

With this my sceptre sword.

*[Moans from the Holder of the Reed. Lucifer strikes him to one knee, and strides past him, out of sight. Bells chime.]*

## CHORUS OF CHILDREN.

There, where Christ in his manger lay,  
Angels kneel by night and day.  
Wise men search his wisdom sweet,  
Crowns of kings are at his feet.  
Rich men with their pearls bespeak  
Wealth he wards for poor and meek.  
Rich men with their pearls have sought  
Wealth the poor obtain for naught.

## POET.

Master!



SPIRIT OF THE REED.

*[Still half kneeling, with his brow on his hand, raises  
his head.]*

Why callest thou me "Master," son?

POET.

I know not. But I know thou art my Lord.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Young Soul, thou art unborn.

POET.

Yet I would die  
For thee. Sir, when may I be born?

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

For me  
Though many die . . . not all that think they would.

POET.

How, die?

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Some nailed to trees, like me.

POET.

So die.

I would

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

And some in dungeons, underground.

POET.

Would I.

Even so.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Many in pestilence, to serve  
The sick, and me.

POET.

I'd fear not pestilence.

OF THE REED.

And many more on battlefields.

POET.

Give me

A battlefield.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

But most and dearest, they  
Who did forsake what they loved best, and in  
So doing, live.

POET.

My best will I forsake.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Strange sight hast thou.

POET.

My eyes, I'll give to thee,  
And thy strange kingdom.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

With those eyes wouldst see  
My foe afoot tonight in this dark world?  
Behold, before a palace door I stand,  
And knock.

POET.

Oh, master, may I see?

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Go see  
This night, how strong is Life, and Pride of Life.  
For swords, this night unsheathed, shall pierce my side,  
Again, and yet again, until the world  
Shall wheel its surface to the sickened Sun,  
One battlefield. Behold, I stand at this  
King's door, and knock.

POET.

And shall he hear thee, Lord?

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Go see how strong is Pride of Life, and say  
If, after seeing this, thou'lt squander it for me.

CHIMES AND VOICES

Wise men search His wisdom, sweet,  
Crowns of kings are at his feet.  
Rich men, with their pearls, have sought  
Wealth the poor obtain for naught.

*[Thick concealing clouds]*



## ACT I

The thick clouds finally reveal:—

SCENE: *A State Bed Chamber of Frederick's Palace at Berlin. FREDERICK THE GREAT lies in a bed placed sidewise in an alcove at the back of the Chamber, on the right. A dressing cabinet is at the left, and a little in front of it, large chairs on either side of a table. A great door is at the foot of the bed in line with its length.*

A GROOM of the Chamber gives FREDERICK a cup to drink who takes it in a hand shaking with the ague.

FREDERICK.

[*Having quaffed the cup.*] Medicine is an unborn science. Have the bounty to send me my new monkey, and Pluto, his brother.

GROOM.

His brother, Majesty?

FREDERICK.

Yes, Pluto, my blackamoor, an ape endowed with tropic epigram. I must have conversation. I'm sick of the ennui of hearing the bed reply its wooden repartee to my ague.

[GROOM goes out. Bells chime in the distance.

FREDERICK slowly rises from his bed and stands shaking with the ague.]

Christmas and ague are great interruptions to the business of life.

VOICES OF CHILDREN.

[Growing louder.]

Wise men search his wisdom sweet,  
Crowns of kings are at his feet,  
He who breathed the oxens' breath,  
King and Conqueror over death.

FREDERICK.

[Going to his dressing cabinet and searching for a hand mirror.] Piety keeps the common people out of mischief. But if my Prussian subjects paid as much attention to the curling of periwigs as they do to psalm singing—[Looks at himself in the mirror]—we should be the best dressed gentlemen in Europe. [Takes a pinch of snuff, his hand shaking.]

[ENTER PLUTO, *leading a monkey on a cord, followed by the GROOM.*

PLUTO.

[*Bowing, and trying to make the monkey bow.*] You Poker Back! Don't you know folk is shovelled out of here that can't make bows to kings?

FREDERICK.

Teach him to talk, Pluto. I'd like to know his reason for not bowing,—before I execute him.

PLUTO.

Many's the time I tries to make him talk, . . . and threaten him with a good gallows, too!

FREDERICK.

[*Taking snuff.*] Threatened him with the gallows, have you!

PLUTO.

Yes, your Sire.



FREDERICK.

That shows how little threats alone accomplish. They won't even make a monkey talk. On the gallows, now, he would have to dance. Have you taught him how to dance yet?

PLUTO.

Yes, your Sire. Poker dances smarter most than me.

FREDERICK.

Smarter than you! That's smarter than a hippopotamus. What does he dance?

PLUTO.

The English Dead Eye, the Austrian Strangle, The Guinea Gallop, and the American Idiot.

FREDERICK.

Give me the Austrian Strangle.

PLUTO.

Poker won't dance without his music . . . any more than me. No Siree, your Sire.

FREDERICK.

Music! Is that all? Heinrich, where's my flute?  
[HEINRICH fetches the flute. FREDERICK plays upon it falteringly, still shaken with the ague. PLUTO and POKER dance, at first with clumsy wheelings, afterwards more rapidly, until the cord gets wound round POKER's neck. Putting down the flute.] Is that the Austrian Strangle?

PLUTO.

[Bowing low.] Yes, Siree, your Sire.

FREDERICK.

When I accomplish the Austrian Strangle, I hope my monkey will not look so wise.

PLUTO.

Look pleasant, Poker. Fetch a smile, you Ape!

FREDERICK.

Yes, Poker, it's sometimes wise to smile in trying circumstances.

PLUTO.

[Ruefully.] He looks like he would like to do the American Idiot.

FREDERICK.

[*Yawning and stretching in the midst of his shakes.*] Well, he may not do the American Idiot. I'm not interested, for the moment, in American idiots. [*Looks at himself again in the hand mirror.*] And I think I hear a knock, which may mean the Austrian Ambassador, or another love letter from Monsieur Voltaire, which is all the same to you as African crawfish. Pray make yourself part of the furniture. Have you learned yet how to be a lacquer idol?

PLUTO.

Yes, your Sire.

FREDERICK.

Make sure you be an idol of *black* lacquer!

PLUTO.

Yes, your Sire. [*Pulling POKER by the cord.*] Here, Poker, come, sir. You're a blacker idol.

[*They sit beside the bed like idols and roll eyes.*

GROOM, after opening the door a moment, goes to  
FREDERICK.]

FREDERICK.

Monsieur Voltaire, or Austria?

GROOM.

I don't know which, your Majesty.

FREDERICK.

Let him come in. [ENTER POET, *dressed in black.*]

FREDERICK.

[*Turning round.*] Ah, Monsieur, I see you are an Ambassador. But not the one that I expected. Have you brought me another message from 'Monsieur Voltaire? Don't tell me his gold coach has broken down again! Don't tell me he will not be here tonight! I must have a trifling talk with him which may upset the equilibrium of Europe. If he delays again, . . . he'll find me gone! I'll not be here tomorrow!

POET.

Sire, Monsieur Voltaire is near by on his road.

FREDERICK.

He sent you with the message?

POET.

No. I passed him on the way.

FREDERICK.

[*Turns, with a quick scrutiny.*] You passed him!  
Then you are *not* his messenger?

POET.

No, Sire.

FREDERICK.

Who *are* you then?

POET.

I am a Poet.

FREDERICK.

*Delightful!* So am I.

POET.

And a Soul Unborn.

FREDERICK.

Still *more* delightful! You're a Lunatic! Pray take  
a chair. [*Points to one on the opposite side of the  
table.*] I've had a monkey here to beguile me while I  
shake with the ague. And now I have a lunatic. You  
speak with a good French accent, Monsieur le Lunatique.  
[*POET sits opposite FREDERICK at the table.*]

POET.

The tongue I speak is immaterial.

FREDERICK.

*Parbleu*, it's well you didn't attempt to afflict me with German. It is a language for boors.

POET.

You are a German, Sire?

FREDERICK.

Unhappily! A man should never be reproached with his birth. But I forget you don't understand such things, being yet unborn.

POET.

O yes. I understand many things, Sire. Your Majesty was born to a throne.

FREDERICK.

Yes. Happily! That is why I submit to being a German. Let us discuss an affair more interesting. You say you are a poet. Are you a dramatic poet?

POET.

Yes, Sire. I should like to write a drama, with you as hero.

FREDERICK.

Capital! Don't kill me off! I'll furnish you with every situation but my death.

POET.

A situation of heroism, Sire?

FREDERICK.

O yes. I'll furnish that too, incidentally. You see me in an ague. It's my shaking day. I shake, but not from fright.

POET.

I'm sorry, Sire, to see you so.

FREDERICK.

Shed no tears over me, Monsieur the Poet Lunatic. I was about to say, I shake this evening, but by midnight I shall dance . . . dance at a court ball, a *bal masqué*, and before sunrise I shall be in uniform, post haste, to my battalions, in the Austrian snow fields.

POET.

I was about to speak of that.

FREDERICK.

[*Turning imperiously.*] Indeed! Who gave you liberty to speak on such a subject?

POET.

Poets and Lunatics have licenses.

FREDERICK.

[*Smiling.*] Quite true. I intended from the start to consign you ultimately to the guardhouse. And so, *pro tem.*, I gave liberty to you,—to you, and my own tongue. What were you going to say?

POET.

We were discussing heroism, Sire.

FREDERICK.

[*Taking snuff.*] Ah yes! Heroism! [*Musingly.*] A pretty French word!



POET.

What shall you do, once you have plunged into the Austrian snow fields?

FREDERICK.

[*Straightening himself and folding his dressing gown about him.*] Yes, yes. I see, Monsieur, like most men afflicted with your malady, you have the power of sticking to your point. Heroism! That's the point. [*Takes snuff again and muses between his shakes.*]

POET.

It is the question for whose answer I came into the world before my time.

FREDERICK.

[*Looking at him compassionately.*] Poor gentleman! How would you define this flighty word, which seems so to have dominated you?

POET.

Life, Sire, I foresee is sweet; and heroism only, I surmise, has power to part with life.

FREDERICK.

Tut, tut, you go too far. Heroism does but *risk* its life, in hope of keeping it and something more.

POET.

[*Gazing earnestly at the king.*] Instruct me, Sire. What is this something more than life?

FREDERICK.

The Pride of Life.

POET.

The Pride of Life! O Foeman of my Lord! And for *this* you go out by the cold December dawn, into the Austrian snow fields!

FREDERICK.

Why yes. That's nothing, child. I've had more chance of chillblains in my own father's palace. But you want heroism, in me personified. Well, I see I must fetch out the risks for you, before you are satisfied with my role of hero.

POET.

[*Leaning forward eagerly.*] Yes Sire, what are your risks?

FREDERICK.

[*Taking snuff.*] Two gentlemen are due here now . . . who will thoroughly lay bare my risks . . . Monsieur Voltaire of France, and Monsieur Botta from the Court of Austria.

POET.

Yes, I passed them on the road, each in his coach.

FREDERICK.

[*With quick inquiry.*] You passed the Ambassador from Austria, too?

POET.

Yes, and with him in the coach a lovely woman.

FREDERICK.

[*Laughing.*] Oh no, Monsieur the Poet Lunatic, that was a lovely vision.

POET.

Beautiful as a Queen. I think she *was* the Austrian Queen.

FREDERICK.

[*Looking at himself in the hand mirror.*] No, my friend. If the Austrian Queen were beautiful as the Queen of Sheba, and I had the wisdom of Solomon, she would not come to question me on this particular December night. [*Lays down the mirror.*] Come, seeing you are a Lunatic, and must ultimately be incarcerated, I may as well permit you to remain and hear.

POET.

Yes, yes! Hear what!

FREDERICK.

Hear the recitation of the risks I run.

POET.

And your reward?

FREDERICK.

[*Picking up his flute.*] Ah, my reward! Do you enjoy the flute?

POET.

It must be marvelous . . . your high reward.

FREDERICK.

[*Twirling the flute in his fingers.*] If the sight of my name in the gazettes, as Frederick the Great, should bore me . . . I always have the flute. [*Begins to play. Interrupting himself.*] This is a Minuet composed by a young Austrian at the Court of France.

POET.

Music has a thousand tongues.

[*FREDERICK continues to play. PLUTO makes POKER beat time with his paws. A knock. FREDERICK lays down the flute. GROOM opens the door, and turns.*

FREDERICK.

[*Eagerly.*] Monsieur Voltaire from France, or Monsieur Botta from the Court of Austria?

GROOM.

Sire, the Austrian Ambassador.

FREDERICK.

[*Turning about in his chair.*] Enter, Monsieur. I have been awaiting this interview, the while I shake with the ague.

BOTTA.

[*Entering and bowing with his tricorn across his heart. Then standing erect.*] I hope, Sire, there is nothing portentous in your shakes.

FREDERICK.

That depends, Monsieur. If Atlas had the ague, he would shake the world. I am no Atlas. But I have Prussia, and the so-called Austrian province of Silesia, on my shoulders. And the world will at least take notice, if my shakes should shake the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Province of Silesia.

BOTTA.

[*Stiffening and interrupting.*] Not yet Silesia, Sire.

FREDERICK.

Pray be seated. [GROOM *brings forward another great chair.*] This is a young Poet, who thinks he is unborn. He will not interrupt our conversation. [POET and BOTTA *bow, and they both seat themselves.*]

BOTTA.

I am informed by my Government, Sire, that your Majesty has already overstepped the bounds of diplomatic conversation.

FREDERICK.

Conversation. . . . What a word! It is impossible for me to be conversing all the time, Monsieur. Negotiations without weapons are like music without instruments. Sometimes I play upon the flute. [*Picks up the flute.*]

BOTTA.

And sometimes, Sire, you play on other instruments. It has been indisputably ascertained, that fifteen of your regiments, artillery, horse, and foot, are already encamped on the Silesian Border, at Frankfort on the Oder.

FREDERICK.

[*Inclining his head.*] You have been correctly informed about my regiments at Frankfort on the Oder. Did your emissaries also make it known, that tonight, when my ague fit is finished, I shall dance at a Court Ball, and before sunrise be in my army uniform, post haste, to join my regiments?

BOTTA.

[*Rising from his chair.*] My God, impossible!

FREDERICK.

[*Looking up at him with a cynical smile.*] Not only possible, but probable: not only probable, but quite inevitable. Pray be seated, Monsieur. [Botta *reluctantly sits down and remains in gloomy silence for a moment.* FREDERICK, *toying with the flute on the table, watches him with a sinister smile.*]

FREDERICK.

[*After a pause.*] You surely would not have me wait, Monsieur?

BOTTA.

[*Breaking into his reverie with a gloomy frown.*] Wait?

FREDERICK.

Yes, till your famous army corps, trained under Prince Eugene, should clamber down your mountain sides among the Spring violets and overwhelm me.

BOTTA.

Sire, it is Christmas tide.



FREDERICK.

I know. The chimes and carols all the evening have been annoying me. It was as much as I could do to get a few moments of silence for my flute.

BOTTA.

The snow fields of Silesia are bitter cold. And the mountains, Sire, have sometimes swallowed up whole armies in their glaciers.

FREDERICK.

I know. If my good soldiers survive a successful campaign through a Silesian winter . . . they will be the wonder of the world.

BOTTA.

Take counsel before it is too late, young King. Your regiments will not survive. They have stomachs to be starved, as well as feet and noses to be frozen.

FREDERICK.

Let's hope they will not starve. I am having Easter eggs painted for their festival of Victory.

BOTTA.

Sire, our Silesian peasantry have long been accustomed to build their graneries within fortresses.

FREDERICK.

My soldiers have long been accustomed to marching without food. I have trained them to march twice a week on empty stomachs. Besides, when our guns have beaten down the walls of Glogau, there will be grain a plenty, not to speak of hogs.

BOTTA.

[*Rising.*] And this is the answer I am to take to Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary, and Archduchess of Austria?

FREDERICK.

Hardly necessary, Monsieur the Ambassador from Austro-Hungary, I shall take the message myself, in person.

BOTTA.

[*Looks at FREDERICK a moment in angry scorn.*] Sire, you have been pleased to speak of the wonder of the world. The world will indeed wonder at you, and do something more than wonder.

FREDERICK.

[*Bowing.*] You flatter me, Monsieur.

BOTTA.

Yes, when the world shall hear that you have risked your soldiers' lives in dead of winter, against the armies of our Prince Eugene.

FREDERICK.

The greater glory, if I whip the armies of your Prince Eugene.

BOTTA.

When all the world shall hear that you have invaded a young Queen's territories, without "by your leave."

FREDERICK.

That was her fault. She would not give me leave.

BOTTA.

When London, Paris and Saint Petersburg . . . yes, and the very shores of far America shall hear that you have tried to snatch her heritage from the gentle hand of a woman, England and France, and Russia with her hosts, will rise in her defence.

FREDERICK.

Ladies should never mix with politics.

BOTTA.

I say, Sire, when the world shall know what you have done, without the faintest shadow of a right——

FREDERICK.

My rights, Monsieur, are being drawn, in legal form, by a man of imagination, a poet and a lawyer, one Monsieur Voltaire.

BOTTA.

Damn Voltaire!

FREDERICK.

[*With a delighted smile.*] Again unnecessary. He has been already damned by Christendom.

BOTTA.

Sire, you have chosen, for your advocate, one who, they say, does not believe in God. And yet God shall witness as well as the world the deed you undertake this night.

FREDERICK.

[*Rising, bowing, and waving BOTTA away.*] If so, He must have witnessed the feats of many conquerors. My compliments to Maria Theresa, the Queen of Hungary and Archduchess of Austria.

BOTTA.

You may face her and the Judge of all the world before you think.

FREDERICK.

You speak as if they both were in my antechamber.

BOTTA.

[*At the door.*] It is a wise king, Sire, that knows who stands upon his threshold. I will convey your message. [*Bows and goes out. Silence a moment. Then the POET looks at FREDERICK, listens and looks away again.*]

POET.

Behold one stands at the door, and knocks. [FREDERICK, *his flute poised in his hand, turns and gazes at the POET.*]

FREDERICK.

I did not hear. [*Settles himself in his seat and looks at the POET, with some curiosity as he takes snuff. After a moment.*] I wish you well of your ears, Monsieur, which seem abnormally acute. You shall hear more tonight, if you are not already satisfied about those risks I run, and that quality you seek in me, as hero of your drama—the quality called heroism.

POET.

Heroism ?

FREDERICK.

Risking life, for pride of life.

POET.

I do not so define it.

FREDERICK.

[*Dreamily.*] No. You did have quite another definition which for the moment I've forgotten. [*Looks at the POET inquiringly.*]

POET.

I said it was the power that made men *part* with life.

FREDERICK.

For what?

POET.

For death . . . and birth into a life beyond.

FREDERICK.

[*Leaning forward and tapping the table.*] Let me tell you something, my young poet. There are many ways of twisting many things. You for example want to twist me in a drama as a great monarch of a little kingdom; who toils from dawn to dark, to give his subjects well-tilled barley fields, and Holstein oxen, and French opera, and who would throw himself before the guns for them in battle should they need a defender.

POET.

It would be a life that any king might choose with gleaming eyes.

FREDERICK.

Now let me tell you something, and reflect upon it. I do toil from dawn to dark, indeed, and give my subjects well-tilled barley fields, and Holstein oxen, and French opera. Yes, and Silesian cheese. I risk my life on those same battlefields, to give my subjects fresh Silesian cheese; but not for my dear subjects' sake or for their happiness.

POET.

No? What then?

FREDERICK.

I wish to be the king of a Prussia more feared and prosperous than any kingdom of the world. I wish to be the conqueror of the fertile valley of Silesia, against Austria, France, Russia, and perhaps even England, against the Christian world.

POET.

For what then?

FREDERICK.

That I may drink French coffee in my dressing gown, while I read my name in the gazettes of various languages. Do you see?

POET.

I see. You shall appear in my drama . . . but not as hero.

FREDERICK.

You are difficult, Monsieur; like all good lunatics.



POET.

Yes, I am very sorrowful; for I begin to see what it must mean to have the gift of life, with great possessions.

FREDERICK.

One never wishes to diminish them, my friend.  
[GROOM opens door.]

GROOM.

Your Majesty, Monsieur Voltaire. [FREDERICK, springing up, rushes toward his guest, his dressing gown outspread.]

FREDERICK.

Ah! *Mon Ame!*

VOLTAIRE.

*Ma Vie!*

FREDERICK.

My Everything!

VOLTAIRE.

My All. [*They embrace.*]

VOLTAIRE.

The journey to this Elysium of your embrace, my poet among kings, was to me interminable.

FREDERICK.

The ennui of awaiting your interminable journey, my king among poets, was to me insupportable. I have been forced to assuage my chagrin with a lunatic. Let me present to you a young man who calls himself a poet. [VOLTAIRE *stares and bows stiffly.*]

FREDERICK.

Being a poet, he will be an appreciative auditor. Being a lunatic, he will not annoy you as a rival. Pray, have you had refreshments on the road? [VOLTAIRE *shakes his head and waves his hand in annoyance.*] You will sup here with me on a good French pâté, and Moselle wine and cognac. [*Pushes VOLTAIRE into one of the great chairs.*] What have you done upon the road to amuse yourself, my long-awaited Divinity? Have you criticized my verses? Above all, have you drawn the brief to my proud title to Silesia?

VOLTAIRE.

Ah! my Genius King, I have had a thousand *douleurs* on the road.

FREDERICK.

Pray take some snuff, my King of Geniuses. I find it excellent for *douleurs* of all sorts—ague, everything.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Helping himself to snuff.*] Ague?

FREDERICK.

Yes. I have shaken with the ague, in my impatience to see you.

VOLTAIRE.

I wonder if ague was my malady. I have had a thousand, as I said. Migraine, distemper, gout, and gallstones, not to speak of jaundice, pleurisy, and——

FREDERICK.

Prize of all my possessions, let us not speak of them.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Angrily.*] How?

FREDERICK.

Here comes the meal my French cook has prepared.  
*Sacré Coq!* I must get into my court clothes for the ball. [*To POET.*] Pray serve Monsieur Voltaire and yourself. [*Motions to GROOM.*]

VOLTAIRE.

For the ball?

FREDERICK.

In honor of Monsieur Voltaire, Prince of the Pen.  
[*Has his coat, waistcoat, and shoes changed by GROOM.*]

VOLTAIRE.

[*Throwing himself back and closing his eyes.*] Ah! I have had such weariness with writing on the way! I wish never to see a pen.

FREDERICK.

[*Sits before the dressing mirror while the GROOM curls his cue.*] Don't tell me, you vital breath of my existence, that you are too weary to read me my title to Silesia?

VOLTAIRE.

Title to Silesia, my most exorbitant of callow Royalties! What time had I to think of your title to Silesia? My *Henriade* was under criticism in the Paris Grand Opera House.

FREDERICK.

[*Coming forward.*] And?

VOLTAIRE.

And I was writing tirades! such as my critics can never read and live. [*Takes snuff with an air of exultation.*]

FREDERICK.

[*Claps his hands.*] Bravo! [*Seating himself and helping VOLTAIRE to food.*] Insert a tirade on my enemies into my title to Silesia.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Turning from his food in disgust.*] Title to Silesia! title to Silesia! title to Silesia! My dear preposterous young king, I fear you have not the true poetic temperament. With Crebillon attacking me, disputing my supremacy as the first poet of the world, what time had I to think about—[*in contempt*!—your title to Silesia?

FREDERICK.

[*Leaning back and looking shocked.*] Don't tell me, Supreme Poet of the world, you have not written out the brief of my title to Silesia!

VOLTAIRE.

Supreme importunity of audacity! Have I not spoken of my migraine, my pleurisy, my——

FREDERICK.

[*Leaning forward and tapping the table with his finger.*] Yes, yes, my King of the Drama; your jaundice, gout, and gallstones. But you forget London, Paris, and St. Petersburg must read my title while I am marching over the Silesian frontier in the sunrise tomorrow.

VOLTAIRE.

What! You march away tomorrow?

FREDERICK.

Before sunrise.

VOLTAIRE.

I should never have endured the inconveniences of a journey from Paris to Berlin had I known this.

FREDERICK.

But, my Emperor of Dramatic Situations, I wrote you my intention.

VOLTAIRE.

But, my Schoolboy of Sovereigns, I did not believe you!

FREDERICK.

But——

VOLTAIRE.

But——

FREDERICK.

My regiments are entrained tonight.

VOLTAIRE.

But my Alexandrines are finished! I intended to read you my new drama in the morning.

FREDERICK.

Magnificent! Practice it on this young poet till my return. Then we shall have a festival with its performance at my victorious entry into Berlin. Meanwhile . . . my title to Silesia.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Slapping the table.*] *A* has your title to Silesia!

FREDERICK.

[*Slapping the other side of the table.*] On the contrary, my dear Prince of Fiction, produce it from your stocking! . . . or I'll present you with a mitten.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Rising in fury.*] What, my *congé*!

FREDERICK.

For what did I send you a gold coach?

VOLTAIRE.

[*Pacing about.*] An old one of your crazy father's that three times broke its wheels.

FREDERICK.

For what have I assigned you sixty thousand francs a year together with a title of nobility?



VOLTAIRE.

To grace your graceless court and read my Alexandrines.

FREDERICK.

[*Shrugging.*] Tut! I can read them in a paper cover. [*With sudden wheedling.*] Come, Incomparable of Wits, I bought your wit to work, for one thing, on my rights and title to Silesia.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Pacing about.*] Rights, . . . they are a vacuum. Title, . . . it does not exist, except outside the universe.

FREDERICK.

Until your creative faculty create them.

VOLTAIRE.

I bargained for nothing so *bourgeois*.

FREDERICK.

[*With spitting irony.*] Sixty thousand francs for a first reading of your Alexandrines!

VOLTAIRE.

Sixty thousand francs, you Counter-Jumper King!  
... Sixty thousand francs are *cheap* for a first hearing  
of my Alexandrines. If I'm to do your dirty lawyer's  
work besides, ... I'll take it out in perquisites.  
[*Pockets some candles, as he passes one of the sconces.*  
FREDERICK *watches him amused.*]

FREDERICK.

Five tallow candles are cheap for a legal title to  
Silesia. [VOLTAIRE *seats himself in a half-mollified huff.*]

FREDERICK.

Now to business. Did you receive my communication,  
carefully drawn up, about the *Erbverbruderung*?

VOLTAIRE.

*Erbverbruderung*! Why should I pain my sensibili-  
ties with a language of such barbarities?

FREDERICK.

Most Imperial of Wits, I hoped you would translate  
its barbarities into sublimities.

VOLTAIRE.

Sublimities! I must have something to be sublime about. I tell you, your *Erbverbruderung* is . . . dish-water.

FREDERICK.

Have some wine. [VOLTAIRE *tastes it.*] True Moselle.

VOLTAIRE.

Not bad at all.

FREDERICK.

With good wine in your throat, Most Sublime of Poets, and six tallow candles in your pocket, . . . I hope you will not have the inhumanity to deny me an epigram for the gazettes about my rightful invasion of Silesia.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Sipping the wine.*] The wine is exceptional. The candles, as you say, are mere tallow. [*Takes out one and examines it.*] How many regiments of horse have you on the frontiers of Silesia?

FREDERICK.

Eight.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Sipping wine again.*] We should call that a mere *goutte* in France.

FREDERICK.

It is the weakest arm of my service. I should not care to face the cavalry of France, while my artillery was engaged with Austria. You see, I prefer to meet France at bar and bench. And so I have been a trifle fussy about this title to——

VOLTAIRE.

[*Holding up his glass to the light.*] You tell me you are on the road tomorrow morning? You would not have to face cavalry of France, while your artillery was engaged with Austria.

FREDERICK.

True, Incomparable of Wits.

VOLTAIRE.

How many regiments of cannoneers have you?

FREDERICK.

Fifteen. They are sufficient for all the Queen of Hungary can get into Silesia, in twelve months. . . . if Russia does not set her foot to interfere. Therefore I wish to employ her time in reading up my title.

VOLTAIRE.

[*Sipping again.*] How many regiments of foot has Russia to her hand?

FREDERICK.

Fifty. But not three to her hand.

VOLTAIRE. .

Against what of yours?

FREDERICK.

Against seventy-five.

VOLTAIRE.

Ready to your hand?

FREDERICK.

Ready to fight twenty-five of Austria.

VOLTAIRE.

[*With clean-cut emphasis.*] Then, Incomparable of Kings, I would make it known to all the world, gazettes of London, Paris, Petersburg, that you have eight plus fifteen plus seventy-five regiments, a hundred thousand men . . . a good round hundred thousand reasons for capturing Silesia.

FREDERICK.

[*Springing to his feet.*] Magnificent, Incomparable, Adorable of Wits and Poet Lawyers! [*To the GROOM.*] Send me my secretary. It shall go to every press in Europe. [*Exit GROOM.*]

A round hundred thousand reasons for capturing Silesia!

VOLTAIRE.

Most volatile of Kings, I seem to remember to have found you in an ague fit.

FREDERICK.

It has left me, Most Intrepid of Dramatists. You are more efficacious than every drug of Araby. I feel my ague has left me never to return. Do you hear that Monsieur the Poet Lunatic? A good round hundred thousand reasons for capturing Silesia!

[ENTER GROOM.]

GROOM.

Your Majesty, they await you to open the court ball.

FREDERICK.

[*Bending over VOLTAIRE, and offering his arm.*]  
Monsieur Voltaire, the Poet, Wit, and Lawyer of his age!  
. . . Monsieur Voltaire and I will open the Court Ball.  
[*They turn together to go out.*] A good round hundred  
thousand reasons for capturing Silesia.

[ENTER, in court dress and mask, MARIA THERESA,  
*who stands before them.* FREDERICK and VOL-  
TAIRE break asunder, and stand each a little to  
*one side of her.*]

FREDERICK.

[*Bowing low.*] Madame, whoever you may be, your  
domino but ill conceals your beauty. I am about to open  
the Court Ball, Madame. The opening minuet shall be  
with you, Madame. Will you have the goodness to  
inform me, at least, whom you impersonate?

MARIA THERESA.

Maria Theresa.

FREDERICK.

Ah! The plot thickens. Do you hear this, O King of Dramatists?

VOLTAIRE.

[*Taking snuff and looking at MARIE THERESA with head atilt.*] Madame is well cast for her role. The throat and carriage is imperial.

FREDERICK.

The ears and eyebrows might be those of a Kaiser's daughter. Why did you choose the part, Madame?

MARIA THERESA.

To see if the preposterous could be true.

FREDERICK.

Indeed, you pique my curiosity. Pray have a chair! The ball can wait.

MARIA THERESA.

I'm afraid I shall never sit as friend to friend with you.



FREDERICK.

Admirable. She does the part as though bred up to it. Will you act in the masterpieces of this gentleman, come here to grace my graceless court? This is the great Voltaire.

MARIA THERESA.

He is well placed at your court. I hear that he does not believe in God.

FREDERICK.

Madame, he is an intellectual. With such God is out of fashion.

MARIA THERESA.

Your Majesty must also be an intellectual.

FREDERICK.

[*Bowing.*] You flatter me.

MARIA THERESA.

I have not come here to flatter you.

## FREDERICK.

Then why put on a mask? Come, take it off. I'll not betray you when we dance. You shall be heralded as Maria Theresa, and nothing more. Come. I'm sure your beauty does not fear a judge. This gentleman, Voltaire, is a great judge of beauty. Permit him to sit down. He has migraine. [*Places a chair for VOLTAIRE.*]

## VOLTAIRE.

And pleurisy.

## FREDERICK.

And jaundice, gout, and gallstones. But nothing to impair his intellect. He is the greatest intellectual of his age. Will you not sit, Madame? [*MARIA THERESA shakes her head. FREDERICK seats himself.*] And now, Madame, let our eyes feast while our ears drink in your conversation. Come, while you disport yourself as Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary and Archduchess, you seem to forget that I am King of those particular square inches that you're standing on.

## MARIA THERESA.

[*Takes off the mask.*] But not one inch of my great province of Silesia.

FREDERICK *and* VOLTAIRE.

[*Together.*] Ah!

VOLTAIRE.

She is indeed of a beauty to bewilder. She outdoes the part.

FREDERICK.

And so like pictures of the Queen, Madame, you startled me. Who got you up? Was it that rascal portrait painter, Pesne? Who are you in brief, Madame?

MARIA THERESA.

It must content you for tonight to look at me as Maria Theresa.

FREDERICK.

It does not content me.

MARIA THERESA.

No! It will content you less to hear me.

FREDERICK.

Speak on, you handsome minx. I like to hear you speak.

MARIA THERESA.

To say two things I give myself the indignity of speaking to you.

FREDERICK.

Would they were twenty, for the indignity. Come, such a compliment, is it not worth a smile?

MARIA THERESA.

I ask you what it is worth to you to rob, like a thief in the night, the daughter of the king who saved your life.

FREDERICK.

Ah, epigrams, my pretty one. Do you hear that, Wit of the World?

VOLTAIRE.

[*Reaching for his wine glass.*] Assuredly. It needs a repartee.

FREDERICK.

What is it worth to rob the daughter of the king who saved my life by a letter to my angry father? What did the letter cost the king to save my life? That is my answer. How much did it cost him? Picks up a scrap of paper and tears it in two. Just a scrap of paper. It was long ago destroyed.

MARIA THERESA.

And with it your last shred of honor.

VOLTAIRE.

Your acting is superb, Madame. I engage you, if you will, for my new tragedy.

FREDERICK.

And when I return from my campaign with the Austrian Silesians, perhaps with French, with Russians, and with Englishmen, when I am thin and haggard from my grand campaigns, I shall engage you to read me the account in the gazettes of Frederick the Great.

MARIA THERESA.

A scrap of paper.

FREDERICK.

*Parbleu*, Madame, if you should tear it up, I should have to woo you with my flute. I always have my flute.  
[*Picks up the flute.*]

## MARIA THERESA.

[*Suddenly covering her eyes.*] Play, play upon your flute. [*Uncovering her eyes.*] And see if its notes be sweeter than the gratitude of a queen who would have trained her son to imitate your very walk, if you were willing to be great. [*Clasps her hanging hands.*]

## FREDERICK.

Ah, Madame, did you take me perhaps for some Rhine Prince? I shall be called Frederick the Great, but not from gratitude. I shall be called "the Great" because there are good reasons for me and my good flute.

## MARIA THERESA.

Play on, Frederick, miscalled "the Great," and see if your flute notes will drown the groanings of my slaughtered subjects and give their reasons.

[*She turns and goes out.*]

## FREDERICK.

[*Calling after her.*] Ah, Madame, Madame, if your femininity but knew, I have a hundred thousand good round reasons for conquering Silesia. Come, Monsieur of the Incomparable Wit, we must pursue the lady and open the Court Ball. [*He offers his arm to VOLTAIRE.*]

[*They start to go out when the POET suddenly blocks their way.*]

POET.

King of Incomparable Obliquity——

FREDERICK.

Really, Monsieur, you credit me with too much amiability. Because I have allowed you to be at large this evening, does not mean I release you from the guard-house. Heinrich, this gentleman, you understand, is under immediate arrest.

[HEINRICH *salutes and goes out.*

POET.

King of a hundred thousand fighting men, you, too, are under an arrest. The deeds that this dark night you have devised, the world shall echo them, until your ears long turned to dust shall ache.

FREDERICK.

I so intended of the world. It is my kettle-drum.

POET.

And you shall beat upon it your funeral march to infamy. I came and saw how a great soul could choose to do a little deed, and love its littleness.

FREDERICK.

Tut, tut, this mighty world is but a microcosm.  
[*Flourishes his flute.*] Pluto, come do the Austrian  
Strangle. [*Begins to play. PLUTO and POKER dance  
out in front of him. FREDERICK turns at the door.*]  
*Bon Soir, le Poete Lunatique.* When you are born, write  
a great drama, explaining my hundred thousand reasons.

POET.

I shall.

[*FREDERICK goes out with VOLTAIRE. Chimes are  
heard pealing as the POET stands alone.*]

CURTAIN.



*[Chimes still ring while thick clouds drift by, at last revealing the belfry, as before, where the SPIRIT OF THE REED stands and listens to the chimes, as the clouds blow through the arches of the belfry, and finally reveal the POET's face.]*

POET.

Master!

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Son.

POET.

Pride of Life is known to me.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

And dear?

POET.

Sir, if before I asked one life  
To give, I ask a thousand now.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Thou shalt  
Have one, in God's good time, to give, to give  
Or to withhold, from me thy Lord.

POET.

Where shall  
I find thee, Lord?

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Wherever thou shalt find  
My broken reed.

POET.

There will I die.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

And live.  
It is the power of this my reed, that each  
Time I am smitten, thousands rise to fight  
For me, to die and live.

POET.

I burn to live and die.

*[Chimes, and concealing clouds.]*



## ACT II

TIME: *July 26, 1914.*

SCENE: *A small Danish island near Rügen. At the left, just above the treetops, are the prongs of a small wireless station. Through an opening of the trees in the center, a little out to sea, is visible a yacht flying the German Imperial flag.*

YOLANDE is seen alone petting her Belgian Police dog, crouching beside him, and stroking back his ears as he barks.

YOLANDE.

And was he afraid of the buzzy-box again? And couldn't he ever learn that his future master was talking out of the buzzy-box, a hundred miles away. Yes, his future master. Yes, of course he would. Now, now, now, barking again! What's the matter? [*Springing to her feet and holding the dog by the collar.*]

[ENTER the POET in tweeds.]

POET.

Forgive me, mademoiselle. Do I intrude on private property?

YOLANDE.

On the contrary, Monsieur, more public, I believe, than any circus on the continent.

POET.

Indeed, Mademoiselle, I didn't guess it. In fact I thought that over yonder was the Kaiser's yacht, *Hohenzollern*.

YOLANDE.

It is.

POET.

I was filled with a curiosity to see it.

YOLANDE.

It fills me with more than curiosity.

POET.

Me, too.

YOLANDE.

You are then an Englishman?

POET.

No. I have the good fortune to be born in America.

YOLANDE.

Does that mean you are a friend or an enemy?

POET.

A friend to whom, Mademoiselle? America is a friend to everything high-minded, and large-hearted, and honorable.

YOLANDE.

Then you must be a friend of mine. I am a Belgian. And we Belgians think more of honor . . . than we do . . . of dog biscuit, don't we, Brand?

POET.

[*Bowing with his hat off.*] I have the honor to be your friend, Mademoiselle. [*Wireless begins to buzz.* YOLANDE *rushes to the little station with her finger on her lips.*] Hush! If you are my friend you will keep my secret.

POET.

What is it?

YOLANDE.

[*Holding her hand up.*] Wireless. [*Clasps her hands in excitement.*] *Courage! Courage!* [*Transmits a message. Turning to POET.*] I am at your mercy. This is my little wireless station. I am a new woman, Monsieur.

POET.

But, Mademoiselle, you have just said we were friends. I am ashamed to tell you after that that I don't understand your message.

YOLANDE.

It was in cipher. And I am ashamed of distrusting you, Monsieur.

POET.

You may trust me, Mademoiselle, even after I learn wireless, as a good journalist should.

YOLANDE.

Oh, are you, for example, a journalist? Then you have great power in your hands. How happy you must be in these days to have power.

POET.

On the contrary, I was rather cursing my luck to have to "journal" for a living, instead of——

YOLANDE.

Instead of what?

POET.

[*Knocking some grasses with his stick.*] Oh, instead of just being an out and out poet, and doing nothing else but write poetry.

YOLANDE.

Doesn't the woman you love want you to be a journalist?

POET.

Since you are so charming as to be interested, I may as well tell you the woman I love doesn't care a tennis racket what I am.

YOLANDE.

[*Clasping her hands and gasping.*] Oh! Are you sure?



POET.

Yes, quite sure. She doesn't even know my face, except as a rather silent acquaintance. She might, if she read the poetry I am full of.

YOLANDE.

And doesn't she?

POET.

[*Shaking his head.*] No. Very little of it is even in print.

YOLANDE.

But she will! But she will!

POET.

I hope so, some day.

YOLANDE.

She *surely will*, Monsieur. It always happens that way. I didn't know my lover, till all of a sudden, he did something wonderful.

POET.

And since then?

YOLANDE.

Since then we both began to live.

POET.

[*Turning away and looking off into the distance.*]

Since then you both began to live. [*Turning back.*]

Do you know, Mademoiselle, I have the strange conviction that for me to begin to live, would be giving myself up to die.

YOLANDE.

It is. *It is*, Monsieur. You are a poet. You say things we others only feel . . . feel in our finger-tips and paws, don't we, Brand? Raoul . . . he is my lover, he feels it, too. We both feel it. If you could have known what the little buzzer was saying a moment ago you would be convinced that I understand.

POET.

Is it indiscreet to ask you what it said?

YOLANDE.

I trust you. You couldn't know what we feel, unless you felt as we do. [*Hesitates.*] The message was from my *fiancé*, Monsieur. He is an officer in our Belgian army. He told me news I had been waiting for. [*Hesitates. Then bursts into tears, covers her face and sobs.*]

POET.

*[Stands watching her. After a moment.]* Is it so bad as you believe?

YOLANDE.

It means the King of Belgium, and his army, is prepared for the worst, Monsieur.

POET.

But, but. . . There is no worst. This war talk will blow over. Take my word, as a journalist, for it.

YOLANDE.

*[Looks at him searchingly a moment.]* If I could believe you, I would stay here with my married sister, who is ill. But I can't, but I can't . . . believe in your hope, Monsieur. I must go back to my father and mother in Belgium. My father is the Comte de Malines. His daughters . . . we should no more think of deserting Belgium . . . than Brand would. Would we, Brand? *[Pets the dog.]* He would like to wear a uniform like his master. Wouldn't you be beautiful in red and gold? *[Sadly poking the ground with her toe.]* If I wear a uniform, it will be red and white.

POET.

Red and white?

YOLANDE.

[*Nodding her head.*] White with a red cross.

POET.

But my dear young lady!

YOLANDE.

Yes. War means women, too.

POET.

But my dear young——

YOLANDE.

Young idiot, you would like to say. Don't American girls understand wireless?

POET.

Not all of them.

YOLANDE.

I thought they were more advanced than we are. We shall need advanced women when war comes.

POET.

But it is not coming. War is a thing of the past.  
Why the very bankers wouldn't stand for it.

YOLANDE.

Oh, Monsieur. You are not all bankers in America,  
are you? You will come to our assistance, won't you?  
[*Suddenly covering her eyes.*] We shall be the first to  
fall.

POET.

Mademoiselle, it's hard to believe how anyone so  
blooming as you are should be talking in nightmares.

YOLANDE.

It is, it is a nightmare. We are all asleep but Ger-  
many. Oh, Monsieur, you, who are a poet and jour-  
nalist, pray, I pray you, help to wake your country up.

POET.

America will always have to be reckoned with, if it's  
a case of rescue. We have the reputation of adoring  
the dollar. It's because we idealize the dollar. We are  
a nation of idealists, when the last word is said.

YOLANDE.

I knew it, I knew it! We send our love to America, Brand and I. [*Blows a kiss across the sea. Listens.*] Hush! Quick! In here! [*She catches the POET by the hand and pulls him into a thicket to the left.*]

[*Through the central opening of the woods, COME the KAISER and VON FALKENHAYN. The KAISER is in yachting suit, VON FALKENHAYN in General's field uniform. The KAISER moves in nervous jerks. FALKENHAYN maintains a steady scowl.*]

KAISER.

Wireless is not so thick as we thought, eh, Falkenhayn?

FALKENHAYN.

I certainly thought I saw it.

KAISER.

You see too much. *Nein, nein*, War Minister von Falkenhayn, you are not the first Minister of War to have your head turntabled, because I stand in shining armor. For the present, I am the friend of Peace, as I am the friend of God.

FALKENHAYN.

[*Rather sulkily.*] All Highest, the friend of Peace and God is at a tiger hunt.

KAISER.

How so?

FALKENHAYN.

Do you imagine that when Austria has gobbled up her Serbia, the rest of Europe will watch complacently, while Austria licks her chops?

KAISER.

[*Poking VON FALKENHAYN in the ribs.*] I have stolen a march on all you wiseacres in Berlin. You think because I allowed you to frame the Austrian ultimatum, and because I permitted you in June to call up the Territorials, and because I let Von Jagow warn the other nations not to interfere, you think the Day has come.

FALKENHAYN.

It has, your Majesty.

## KAISER.

[*Holding his sides and laughing.*] Ho ho, my good glum Falkenhayn! Don't think you can change the children's school maps from pink to violet in a day. Mittel-Europa! Your Buffer Empire, your Eastern Grab Bag. . . . It will come, all in good time. But not today.

## FALKENHAYN.

It has come, Majesty. The day is here.

## KAISER.

*Nein, nein*, good Falkenhayn. You are a sharp statesman, and a shrewd strategist as well. But don't be blinded by a mouthful of smoke from Austrian guns.

## FALKENHAYN.

I am not blinded, Majesty. Yesterday the first Austrian hoof stamped upon Serbian soil, and in that moment it staked out another frontier of our Empire.

## KAISER.

You have imagination, Falkenhayn, I admit it, . . . almost as great as mine. But don't be blinded by the dust of Austrian cavalry either.



FALKENHAYN.

I am not.

KAISER.

[*Taps VON FALKENHAYN'S breast.*] Let Austrian dragoons stamp Serbia into one vast parade ground for our armies in the East. Yes, . . . *en route, en route* from Berlin to Bagdad. But just *en route!* You've not your Eastern Grab Bag yet. Serbia is not Russia, Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine. The Day has not yet come. [*Paces about.*] It's not for two years hence. Old Tirpitz and I know. The Day has not yet come.

FALKENHAYN.

[*With a spitting flash.*] The Crown Prince knows it, your Majesty, whether you and Von Tirpitz do or not.

KAISER.

[*Dashing up and down, with clenched fists.*] Gott strafe, do you quote that Dunderhead to me again?

FALKENHAYN.

He voices the belief of nine-tenths of the brains of your Empire.

KAISER.

[*Stopping suddenly.*] It is well he has a voice for others' brains. He has none of his own. Hark you, Falkenhayn, with a Crown Prince's Party, I am not to be threatened. Do you hear! [*Puts his finger close to VON FALKENHAYN'S nose.*] I am the War Lord of my Empire.

FALKENHAYN.

[*Glaring sidewise.*] Your Majesty has well said "War Lord"!

KAISER.

[*Starting back.*] How so?

FALKENHAYN.

Because from this day forth, peace is impossible. [*The KAISER stands, legs apart, arms folded, one hand tugging his ear, as he scrutinizes VON FALKENHAYN, who continues slowly.*] I have been trying to prepare the mind of your Majesty for news I have just heard.

KAISER.

[*Still tugging his ear.*] Well, well. What is it? What? Out with it!

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FALKENHAYN.

Russia is mobilizing . . . from Vladivostock to Petersburg, from Novgorod to Ukraine.

KAISER.

[*Breaks into a boisterous laugh, and slaps his thigh, dashing away to pace about.*] Mere bluff, Von Falkenhayn. A bluff that I shall call. [*Takes out his watch.*] I can be in Berlin by tonight. Nicky and I shall have a pretty bout of telegrams.

FALKENHAYN.

[*Earnestly.*] Majesty, it has gone beyond a bout of telegrams between you and the Czar.

KAISER.

[*Turning quickly.*] How so? You glowering Death's Head, you! Have you not told me a thousand times that Russia is always three years ahead of Germany in the field of diplomacy?

FALKENHAYN.

She is, your Majesty.

KAISER.

Well? And do you mean to tell me that her great blundering Bear, she calls an army, does not know three years ahead that England is powerless to help her? Count France a dead dog.

FALKENHAYN.

[*With a dark look.*] England will not be powerless. France is not yet dead.

KAISER.

[*Patting FALKENHAYN.*] Donner und Blitzen! You are a great statesman, Falkenhayn, as well as an astute strategist. But you've not yet learned, it seems, the lesson of Treitschke, which he learned from my forbear, Frederick the Great, . . . that the State is Power, and Power resides in the monarch. I am the Monarch of Europe.

FALKENHAYN.

Europe, All Highest, will not dispute that in *words*!  
[*After a pause.*] England has guns.

KAISER.

[*Flashing back.*] By sea, but not by land.

FALKENHAYN.

Then why does your Majesty not attack her?

KAISER.

[*With a superior smile.*] That is Von Tirpitz's and my secret. In two years we shall have better guns by sea.

FALKENHAYN.

And if England . . . will not wait?

KAISER.

[*With a quick catching at his ear.*] How so?

FALKENHAYN.

If England stands by her Allies?

KAISER.

With that contemptible little army! It cannot even put down an Irish Rebellion. No, England will not fight, and Russia knows it. And I tonight shall call Czar Nicky's bluff, and command him to demobilize. Yes, he shall leave Austria to clean up Serbia. I'll even threaten Nicky through my German agents with deposition. Come, don't look so glum. Your Buffer Empire,

you shall have it yet. I swear it by old Tirpitz's beard. Did I not last March arrange for the toe of your Buffer Empire with Constantine in Greece? I tell you, Falkenhayn, the State is Power, and Power resides in the monarch. Wait, till, like my forbear, Frederick, wait till the day I have my hundred thousand reasons.

FALKENHAYN.

Meaning ships. The Day is here, All-Highest, whether you have the ships or no.

KAISER.

[*Blazing and clenching his fists.*] What, do you threaten me?

FALKENHAYN.

Is it a threat to ask you to consider an abstract proposition?

KAISER.

[*Dropping his arms.*] How so?

FALKENHAYN.

Suppose that England, who cannot put down an Irish Rebellion, should stand by her allies.

KAISER.

[*Yelling.*] Then, by God in Heaven, we shall crush her. Coast to coast, and crag to crag, and cloud-high tower to tower.

FALKENHAYN.

In what way?

KAISER.

By land and sea.

FALKENHAYN.

Which first?

KAISER.

By land, from coast end to coast end.

FALKENHAYN.

By Calais and by Dover, at the same moment we are crippling France and permitting Russia to overrun our Socialists on the Eastern Frontier.

KAISER.

You have imagination, Falkenhayn . . . almost as great as mine.

FALKENHAYN.

[*Producing a paper.*] What is imagination without power. [*Hands the paper to the KAISER, who seizes it and unfolds it.*] "The State is Power, and Power resides in the monarch."

KAISER.

[*Looking at the paper.*] What is this?

FALKENHAYN.

Power resides in the monarch, Majesty. It is an order for mobilization. We need it signed, while we await your hundred thousand reasons.

KAISER.

[*Reads as he tugs his ear.*] Hm, hm. This provides, as usual, for crossing first of all the Belgian Frontier.

FALKENHAYN.

*Selbst verständlich* . . . an axiom as old as Bernhardi. How else are we to crush your England, coast to coast, and crag to crag, while we are crippling France?



KAISER.

[*Tugging his ear, and gazing at the paper.*] And, as usual, the question arises: If Belgium resists——

FALKENHAYN.

Then we crush Belgium, from cloud-high tower to cloud-high tower. Here is a fountain pen, your Majesty. [KAISER *stares at it.* FALKENHAYN *pushes the pen forward.*] We need your signature.

KAISER.

[*Still stares at the pen.*] From tower to coast.

FALKENHAYN.

England and France, via Belgium. [*Holding out the pen.*]

KAISER.

[*Still stares at it.*] Twelve hundred thousand men.

FALKENHAYN.

Against ten little regiments. It is the whirlwind.

KAISER.

[*After a silence of staring.*] The whirlwind! . . .  
[*Covering his eyes with his right hand.*] And I sowed  
the wind.

FALKENHAYN.

The whirlwind, Majesty. The game is ours. [*Presses  
the pen against the KAISER'S hand. Brand barks, is  
restrained, then bursts forth, dragging his mistress.*  
FALKENHAYN scowls in a fury. The KAISER starts back,  
and looks at the dog as though in terror.]

YOLANDE.

[*Breathless.*] Don't be frightened, Sire! He is just  
a Police dog. He will not bite . . . unless you attack  
him . . . or his mistress.

KAISER.

[*With an effort recovering himself.*] Is he Belgian,  
Mademoiselle?

YOLANDE.

[*Straightens herself up.*] Yes, Sire, we both are  
Belgian.

KAISER.

[*Staring at her as though distraught.*] Twelve hundred thousand men. [*With a wild laugh.*] A hundred thousand reasons.

YOLANDE.

The number of our little Belgian army, Sire.

KAISER.

[*Pulling himself together.*] I was merely quoting a saying, Mademoiselle, of my forebear, Frederick, the Great. He was an interesting old fellow.

YOLANDE.

Not so interesting to the world, today, as you are, Sire.

KAISER.

[*Beaming.*] How so?

YOLANDE.

And Silesia is not so interesting as Belgium.

KAISER.

[*Tugging his ear.*] You have read history.

YOLANDE.

A little, Sire.

KAISER.

Women should occupy themselves with four things.  
Do you know what they are?

YOLANDE.

[*Smiling, counts on her fingers.*] Church, cooking,  
clothes, and children.

KAISER.

[*Beaming again.*] I see you know my maxims.

YOLANDE.

I know many things about you, Sire.

KAISER.

[*With a broad smile, twirling his moustache.*] Indeed! Pray tell me what you know.

YOLANDE.

You have a responsive comprehension.

KAISER.

Yes! How do you know that? Who told you so?  
Are you sure of it? What else do you know?

YOLANDE.

You have a large imagination.

KAISER.

Do you hear that, Falkenhayn? [FALKENHAYN  
*grunts.*] Falkenhayn doesn't realize that, yet, although  
he has an imagination of his own. How did you know  
about my imagination, Mademoiselle?

YOLANDE.

You think in great numbers, Sire. It appalled you,  
the idea of opposing twelve hundred thousand men and  
horse and guns against our little army.

KAISER.

[*Bristling.*] Oppose you? Are you not my friends?  
Why should I oppose my friends? Wherein consists the  
opposition? Why do you say oppose?

YOLANDE.

Why, indeed, oppose?

KAISER.

You mean your army may oppose itself to *me*.

YOLANDE.

If you break into Belgium, our little army will oppose your twelve hundred thousand men and horse and guns.

KAISER.

[*Tugging his ear.*] Mademoiselle, you are presuming to know about a good deal more than cooking and children.

YOLANDE.

I can cook, Sire, and I love children. But I do know something more.

KAISER.

What do you know about the Belgian army?

YOLANDE.

I know wireless. My lover is in the King's Guards. Our little army will oppose you . . . my lover in arms, and the woman he loves unarmed, and all the women of Belgium, and the children. How does that strike your royal imagination?

KAISER.

I could weep for you.

YOLANDE.

With your responsive comprehension.

KAISER.

My heart bleeds for you.

YOLANDE.

And so you will tear up that paper in your hand.

KAISER.

Mademoiselle, this is not a kindergarten party. You know no more of war than a little Belgian sparrow, or you would not speak of my tearing up a paper. War is war.

YOLANDE.

[*Clasping her hands.*] Tell me, then, what is war.  
Come, tell me. [*Seats herself on the bench.*]

KAISER.

Falkenhayn, lend me your writing tablet. I will begin our bout of telegrams. [*He writes while YOLANDE pats the dog's head. KAISER hands the telegrams to FALKENHAYN.*] That will reach Petersburg by noon, I'm thinking.

FALKENHAYN.

Shall I sign it, Majesty? You have not signed.

KAISER.

Yes. Sign it: "Willy."

FALKENHAYN.

[*After reading it.*] It is useless, Majesty. [*Signing.*]  
Useless, All Highest.

KAISER.

Nevertheless, see that it goes, from the masthead of the *Hohenzollern*, and come to me again in fifteen minutes.  
[*FALKENHAYN reluctantly leaves.*]



YOLANDE.

And now tell me, Sire, tell me what is war.

KAISER.

Something, my dear young lady, I hope you will never know.

YOLANDE.

How can I help knowing it, if twelve hundred regiments come marching and riding through my father's gardens?

KAISER.

By all your people not opposing them, you will be safeguarded, man and woman, child, yes, and the very beast.

YOLANDE.

And, suppose, Sire, our honor be too dear to us for that?

KAISER.

Honor, Mademoiselle! Where will your honor be, with batteries shelling every tower that has graced your land? Honor! . . . with drunken soldiers forcing every door, where there are women and unmarried girls.

YOLANDE.

Will all your twelve hundred thousand soldiers be drunk?

KAISER.

Where there are wine-cellars, and power to open them, there is always drunkenness. And power itself, Made-moiselle, is a kind of drunkenness.

YOLANDE.

I see.

KAISER.

The State is Power. The great state has great power. And power resides in the monarch.

YOLANDE.

Does that mean your Majesty may be intoxicated?

KAISER.

[*Rising, with a wild laugh, slapping his thigh, and then sobering down.*] It may be. We Germans have a phrase: *Ein Gottvertrunkener Mensch*. A God-drunken man. My forbear, Frederick, the Great, made

a great mistake in not invoking God, when he spoke of his hundred thousand reasons. He who has power derives it from his God. Power has God given me, akin to His Omnipotence. My hundred thousand reasons are my ten thousand regiments, eleven million fighting men, and all derived from God.

YOLANDE.

[*Clasping her hands in her lap and looking up.*] What is power, Sire?

KAISER.

[*Standing over her and pulling his moustache.*] It is the ability of the strong to impose their will upon the weak, and to overcome them, . . . even to the point of extermination.

YOLANDE.

And that is why women have power over men?

KAISER.

[*Tugging his ear.*] How so?

YOLANDE.

Because men seldom wish to exterminate us, and often they cannot impose their will upon us, except by extermination.

KAISER.

Ha!

YOLANDE.

Belgium is like a woman, Sire. [*Suddenly falls on her knees and raises her clasped hands.*] You would not exterminate us, Sire. [*KAISER crosses his arms and looks down at her.*]

KAISER.

Tut, tut. Women always grow wild when their minds wander from their children.

YOLANDE.

But I love children, Sire. In the name of my unborn Belgian children, I beseech you, do not exterminate us, Sire.

KAISER.

Young lady, hysterics do not help us here. Belgium will not be exterminated. The utmost that will happen is that we shall mix the race.

YOLANDE.

[*Springing to her feet.*] Never, by the Power——

KAISER.

To me, Omnipotence has given power. If I so will, it shall be done.

YOLANDE.

Sire, there was a man, whom drunken power could only crucify.

KAISER.

[*Glowering.*] Young lady, we are facing facts. You are talking to the only monarch in Europe. Do you comprehend what I say? [YOLANDE *listens with her hand to her ear.*] We Germans are live men, and I am their Lord of Lords. Does your intelligence grasp this? Do you attend to what I say? [YOLANDE *gives a sudden cry.*] Nations and women should understand their masters. [YOLANDE *bounds toward the wireless.*]

KAISER.

What? How?

YOLANDE.

[*Waving her hand high.*] Yes! Yes! Be still, if you please, Monsieur le Kaiser!

KAISER.

But, but——

YOLANDE.

[*Waving again.*] Silence! [*With a little shriek of delight.*] Raoul! It is my lover! It is Belgium!

[*KAISER stands still with open mouth, gazing at her as she catches the message, and transmits one. Then she turns, dejected, with hands clasped in front of her, walks toward him, halts in front of him, and looks up into his face.*]

YOLANDE.

Monarch——

KAISER.

Of Europe. What did your message say?

YOLANDE.

Some day you will die.

KAISER.

Not till I have lived to——

YOLANDE.

Not till you have tortured the whole world.

KAISER.

What did your message say? Young lady, do you realize I have power over your small person?

YOLANDE.

Power! The meanest man or woman has power to die, nobly or ignobly.

KAISER.

Don't bandy words with me. What did your message say?

YOLANDE.

[*Looking steadfastly at him.*] The message said Belgium will die nobly.

KAISER.

[*Yelling.*] Fool, little fool, what did you answer the fool who sent that message?

YOLANDE.

I answered a much greater man than you. It was my lover in the Life Guards of the King of Belgium. I answered, I would die with him. I answered——

KAISER.

You little fool! You may yet be glad to die. Know first you are my prisoner. Contradict this message. Say Belgian neutrality will be inviolate. I have instructed my ambassador. Quick! Go! Do you hear? [*YOLANDE shakes her head. He shakes his fist at her.*] What?

YOLANDE.

If it were the truth I would transmit your message, and thank God. But, since it is a lie, I will not.

KAISER.

[*Shaking his fist in her face.*] Do you understand you are my prisoner? [*POET steps from the shade.*]

POET.

No. You are *my* prisoner, your Majesty.



KAISER.

[*Relaxes and stares.*] How so?

POET.

I have power over you.

KAISER.

You!

POET.

The power of the defenseless over the strong. America is the defender of the defenseless. I am an American.

KAISER.

I might have known it from your impudence. You love words, like all your countrymen. You may yet have to learn my maxim: The best word is a blow.

POET.

Words sometimes *are* blows. I am a journalist. I represent a paper of the most important circulation in America.

KAISER.

Ach, so!

POET.

You see, I have a power of a kind.

KAISER.

A kind to be exterminated.

POET.

In America, we do not exterminate free speech, or any form of decent liberty.

KAISER.

Look out your country does not get exterminated.

POET.

By Germany? It is safer for a monarch of all Europe to be a friend, rather than a foe, of America . . . even if he has a hundred thousand reasons for exterminating her.

KAISER.

Come, my friend, I have many million friends in America. I see you are a student of our history. You quote Frederick the Great.

POET.

I sometimes have time for poetry, especially dramatic poetry. I met Frederick the Great, once, somewhere in my imagination . . . or before I was born, as Plato would say.

KAISER.

Ah, you quote Plato, too. [*Pulling his moustache and tapping the poet kindly.*] A Poet, are you? So am I. I have imagination.

POET.

So was Frederick the Great. He had imagination.

KAISER.

A glorious phrase, that—"a hundred thousand reasons!"

POET.

Yes, he took it from Voltaire.

KAISER.

Frederick, like me, was a practical poet, no matter where he got his ideas.

POET!

He got it from Voltaire, who in turn got it from Machiavelli, who taught that the State is Power, and power resides in the Prince. Machiavelli is not popular in America.

KAISER.

[*With his finger on his nose.*] Hm! Well, this is all very interesting. . . . But here are my Ministers of State.

[ENTER FALKENHAYN, TIRPITZ and RATHENAU.  
RATHENAU is old and bent, but very calm, with a look of concentration.]

KAISER.

Falkenhayn, the wireless is here, and you will see to its removal. As yet little harm is done. Hysteria, nothing more. [*Turning to YOLANDE and the POET.*] A mere military measure. You children may go amuse yourselves.

YOLANDE.

This Danish island is my sister's property, Sire. You are at liberty to leave us.

**TIRPITZ.**

[*Puffing in an undertone.*] All Highest, the sea is staked.

**KAISER.**

You mean—— [TIRPITZ *looks a bit anxiously at YOLANDE and POET.* KAISER *continues impatiently.*] Out with it! England is in the Baltic!

**TIRPITZ.**

Yes. England will stand by her allies.

**KAISER.**

[*Clenching his hands.*] May every sailor's bone make of her crags, white sepulchres. England! [*Crunching the paper.*]

**FALKENHAYN.**

This needs its signature, your Majesty. I am from Düsseldorf, . . . Rathenau, here, from Posen. Rathenau is come to say, the banks are ready for the Eastern crisis.

**KAISER.**

How, Rathenau?

RATHENAU.

[*With bent back but calm power, looking up.*] The United Electrical concern——

KAISER.

Will stand behind the banks.

RATHENAU.

[*Nodding.*] From Berlin to Bagdad.

KAISER.

All Germany.

RATHENAU.

Is ready, Majesty.

[*Holds out his pen to the KAISER.*] Your signature.

[*YOLANDE covers her eyes while the KAISER signs the order. POET stands behind her, watching.*]

KAISER.

[*Looking up.*] Wilhelm, by the Grace of God. [*Sees YOLANDE and the POET.*] The world has drawn its sword. [*Turns to go.*] God help us all! . . . but England!

POET.

King and Kaiser, fear the dying, . . . you, who have  
no fear of the living.

KAISER.

Children with your kindermärchen—to me Omnipotence has given . . . a hundred thousand reasons. [*Clicking his heels.*] I am the All-Highest upon Earth.

CURTAIN.

### ACT III.

**TIME:** *The fourth year of the Great War.*

**SCENE:** *A graveyard in a Belgian Spa, not far from the fighting lines. A low wall runs across the back of the graveyard, separating it from a wood. The wall in one place is broken down.*

*YOLANDE, in the moonlight, is seen, seated alone, her head in her hands. A carillon of bells is heard from a tower at the left.*

**ENTER POET,** *in tweeds as before. He tiptoes toward YOLANDE and speaks low.*

**POET.**

*Mademoiselle de Malines. [YOLANDE raises her head.]*  
It was successful. I found Monsieur de Forta. He will be with you in less than twenty minutes.

**YOLANDE.**

*[Raises her hands, with fingers interlaced, above her forehead, as she bows her head.]* Thank God.



POET.

He could hardly believe his ears, when I told him you were so near. He will have to go through several cellars of the town, and cross the graveyard from the north. But he was sure—*[Throws a flashlight on his watch]*—he could do it in twenty-five minutes. He should be here now, in ten.

YOLANDE.

*[Placing her hands on an upright bayonet, planted between the stones of the wall.]* He must not trip over this sharp bayonet.

POET.

You don't need it now. *[Starts to take the bayonet out.]*

YOLANDE.

*[Preventing him.]* No, leave it there. I may need it. *[Turning.]* You have been very kind to me.

POET.

*[Half choking.]* Kind! What cuts us up, us Americans, is that we can do so little for you Belgians. You have had three years of Purgatory, and we have only spent a year at the gates of it.

YOLANDE.

[*Drops her head again.*] Purgatory. [*Raises her head.*] Kind American! Does your religion, like ours, teach you there are two sorts of fires?

POET.

Two sorts? My religion teaches me there are two kinds of dying.

YOLANDE.

[*Eagerly.*] Yes! Yes!

POET.

The kind that plucks life, like a rose, to toss to a lover, and the kind that waits till death steals it, as a thief of thieves.

YOLANDE.

Ah, you are a poet! I am only a simple girl . . . woman. [*Bows her head again. Silence a moment.*] Monsieur, I want to thank you once again, if I should never see you any more.

POET.

No, no!

YOLANDE.

Yes, yes. I want to thank you for every one of our Belgians you helped me save from the horrors of deportation . . . at great risk to yourself. I knew it . . . the electric wires.

POET.

Please, please!

YOLANDE.

Yes, yes. And I thank you, above everything, for bringing my lover to me. You don't know—God only can know—what it is to me.

POET.

But it was nothing, so far as I am concerned. Though I think I do know what it means.

YOLANDE.

[*Starting.*] What do you know?

POET.

You forget I am a lover. I know what it would mean to me to see the woman I love, in America.

YOLANDE.

[*Wringing her hands.*] Ah, God grant you may . . .  
be happy . . . as my lover . . . can never be.

POET.

[*Starts.*] But . . . you. . . .

YOLANDE.

No. Do not ask me what I mean. I only meant you  
to understand how my heart thanked you, for this chance  
to speak to my betrothed. You were the one person that  
could have accomplished it.

POET.

I have accomplished so little since the war began. I  
have tormented myself with all my deficiencies. It seems  
next to nothing a war correspondent can do, even in  
saving a few women. And as for leaving a woman, a  
gentlewoman like you, on the open road, as I was obliged  
to do that night,—

YOLANDE.

[*With a little cry, covering her eyes again.*] Ah! . . .  
do not speak of it.

POET.

It haunts me.

YOLANDE.

It haunts me. But you . . . you must learn to forget it, when you see your sweetheart, in America. She will be so proud of you!

POET.

Not yet, though I do want her to be. She must take a great drama from me, or else the great drama . . . must take me.

YOLANDE.

Ah, yes, you are a poet. But to us ordinary ones it comes. We, too, sometimes, must lay bare our minds. It is why I sent for my Raoul, and God was good to let you accomplish it.

POET.

And here he comes. I leave you, Mademoiselle. But I shall be at hand. He goes out to the right.

[ENTER RAOUL.]

YOLANDE.

[*With a cry.*] Ah! *Mon amant!*

RAOUL.

[*Embracing her.*] *Cœur de mon cœur!* My heart of hearts!

YOLANDE.

Oh, if we might die now, and go to Heaven! We have had our Purgatory.

RAOUL.

[*Holding her off, and gazing at her in the moonlight, as she stands with slowly drooping head.*] I don't hate them for myself, but I want to send them to Hell, when I see you suffer. You're thin in the face!

YOLANDE.

Don't look at me. Just keep me close to you, as long as I may.

RAOUL.

[*Drawing her to him.*] We won't count time. Our kind American is watching. We'll pretend it's eternity, while it lasts.

YOLANDE.

[*With closed eyes.*] Eternity.

RAOUL.

It will be that some day.

YOLANDE.

And you will love me then?

RAOUL.

Of course.

YOLANDE.

But answer me! Are you sure?

RAOUL.

Of course! Why do you torment yourself about eternity? Isn't there tumult enough here in the world of time?

YOLANDE.

Tumult, yes, nothing but tumult. That's why I ask about eternity. We cannot love each other again like this, here in the world of time.

RAOUL.

[*Breaking from her a moment.*] Yolande! This is hysterical. Don't let those brutes, those German swine, don't let them rob you of your superb intrepidity. That would be their worst brigandage.

YOLANDE.

[*Looking up at him, as he holds her hands.*] They've not robbed me of all intrepidity, Raoul. But——

RAOUL.

But what?

YOLANDE.

But—— [*Breaks down and sobs, her head on his breast.*]

RAOUL.

There, my white bunny rabbit! There, there, my furry, frightened hare! They sha'n't have you! We, and our good Allies are licking them, inch by inch, and day by day, though they don't know it yet. They don't know it, but they've done their worst.

YOLANDE.

Oh, Raoul, they *have* done their worst . . . to *me*!  
[*Buries her head deeper with a sob.*] Yes, to me.

RAOUL.

[*With a hoarse cry.*] Yolande!



YOLANDE.

[*Her head still buried.*] Don't kill me. I shall kill myself.

RAOUL.

[*Clasping her closer.*] I kill you! No. Not you. But every cursed hoof and hide of them, as far as my lance can break the ground.

YOLANDE.

Hush, dearest, hush! Someone will hear!

RAOUL.

Then, let Hell hear, where most of them shall go.

YOLANDE.

You hurt me very hard. [*He loosens her.*] It seems to me that I have known the pains of Hell, and it has burned hate away. [RAOUL utters another hoarse cry.] But don't take love from me! Don't take your love away, just these few minutes here! [RAOUL seats her on the wall.

RAOUL.

Yolande, tell me everything. Quickly! Keep nothing back.

YOLANDE.

*[Clasping her hands in her lap, and bending her head.]*  
Thank God, I don't know everything. I fainted again  
and again . . . a long, long time.

RAOUL.

Was it an officer?

YOLANDE.

There was an officer, and there were soldiers. They  
caught me on the road, after I had shown a convoy of our  
Belgians to the kind American.

RAOUL.

But he . . . was he . . . the American . . . he was  
not a witness?

YOLANDE.

Ah, no. It was on the road back to the town, and they  
knew what I had done.

RAOUL.

And they didn't dare repeat the Edith Cavell murder.

YOLANDE.

So they did worse.

RAOUL.

[*Putting his arm about her.*] No, thank Heaven, I have you still, alive.

YOLANDE.

[*Laying her head against his arm.*] But I shall not be, this time tomorrow night.

RAOUL.

Yolande, don't let yourself say wild things. It grows, on all of us, in these awful hours.

YOLANDE.

[*Lifting his hand, and kissing it.*] What do I care, now that I know you will love me through eternity.

RAOUL.

[*Dazedly.*] What do you care?

YOLANDE.

Yes. I mean about parting with you for this little life. Yes, dearest, I'm not crazy. I've done all I could. It is a question of . . . another life . . . to be born into the world.

RAOUL.

[*Covers his face, and sobs.*] Oh, Yolande, Yolande!

YOLANDE.

[*Patting his head.*] Yes, dearest, I knew how it would be with you. [*Still patting his head.*] It was the hardest part of all . . . worse than knowing it for myself. And that is why I know that I must kill myself.

RAOUL.

[*Breaking away.*] Yolande, don't talk like a fool.

YOLANDE.

Don't act as if you did not love me, Raoul. I know now you will when I am dead.

RAOUL.

[*With his back to her.*] I do now. But——

YOLANDE.

Yes, "but." Come here and talk to me, quite calmly. We haven't many minutes. [RAOUL *returns and sits beside her on the wall.*] I have thought it all out. You always said I was quick to think and act. [RAOUL *groans.*] For those days after that awful night, I couldn't think or act, or even speak. And then——

RAOUL.

And then?

YOLANDE.

And then I went to my confessor and he sent to me—most eminent physicians. But——

RAOUL.

But?

YOLANDE.

But it was too late.

RAOUL.

Poor child!

YOLANDE.

No. I can't have you pity me, and grow cold in pity.

RAOUL.

I sha'n't.

YOLANDE.

Or grow hot in hate. I've thought it all out, dearest. You must realize that I am a woman.

RAOUL.

To your undoing.

YOLANDE.

Yes. I might learn to love the little life I can't yet realize.

RAOUL.

What, you mean? No! by God!

YOLANDE.

[*Nodding slowly.*] Yes. Yes, there it is. Because I am a woman, I might not loathe my little child. And you might, therefore, some day kill it. That I might bear. But you might hate me for loving it . . . and that I could not bear.

RAOUL.

[*With his head in his hands, rocking in grief.*] Yolande, Yolande, you're killing me!

YOLANDE.

[*Placing both hands on his head.*] No, dearest, you must live, to deliver Belgium. You understand. You must live to see her delivered. Save every Belgian mother for her Belgian sons. You understand, I'm only parting from you for a little time.. Life is short, Raoul. [*He raises his head, then stands, and takes her hands. They kiss. Then suddenly break apart.*]

BOTH.

What! What was it?

YOLANDE.

[*In a whisper.*] A flash light.

RAOUL.

[*Drawing his sabre.*] Lie close to the wall.

YOLANDE.

It can never be again. Save Belgium. [*Throws herself on the bayonet, with a low groan. RAOUL utters a suppressed cry, and bends over her.*]

RAOUL.

My God, it's done! [*He lifts her body from the bayonet and lets it fall sidewise close to the wall.*]

[ENTER POET.]

POET.

Monsieur de Forta! I saw a flashlight in the woods. I'm afraid we are watched.

RAOUL.

[*Rising.*] What do I care, Monsieur? Life's done, for me. The girl I love is dead.

POET.

What? No! [*Sees YOLANDE.*] Oh, God!

RAOUL.

[*Standing with bent head over her.*] How can we doubt that devils war with God and His angels.

POET.

I never doubted it.



RAOUL.

Yolande told me you understand many things. Do you understand why she has done this? My brain is on fire. Do you understand?

POET.

I think I do. She was serving her country that night on the road to the coast. It was necessary for her to die.

RAOUL.

You understand. Do you understand why I shall be a maniac, unless Belgium is freed?

POET.

I do. Fight on, Monsieur le Capitaine. America is with you to the last man. Quick! The flashlight again! [*He stoops and drags down RAOUL with him, who instantly rises again.*]

RAOUL.

Let it come. I am drunk with her innocent blood. [*Raises both clenched fists.*] I could kill, kill, kill, from the Kaiser to the lowest Carl he kicks into the fight.

POET.

Monsieur, the light! Monsieur, I entreat you! Would you serve your country? Quick! Back to your garrison and fight. Don't let them trap you like a rat. Fight! Fight on! We two shall meet in battle some day, God willing. I will stay here. I have means of escape. You have not. I swear it to you. I will give this gentle lady burial. Will you not trust the word of a gentleman?

RAOUL.

*[Catching his hand and kissing it. God bless you . . . and America.]*

POET.

Your King and Country, Sir. Quick! Be off!

RAOUL.

*[Bends over YOLANDE a moment, then staggers out, with his head sunk in his arms.]* Yolande, Yolande.  
*[POET stands and gazes at the dead body of YOLANDE.]*

POET.

White and red. I thought it was a young girl's wildness, when she said it. So much of red. *[Bends down.]* And warm still. Can it be Belgium, too, is only the

semblance of warm life? Do you hear me, woman who loved? I swear to you, and the woman I love across the sea, Belgium shall be free, or my blood shall lie wet, like this of yours. [*Stoops close over her.*] Yes, warm, and too weak to flow. The Broken Reed. I know you, and your power, at last. I knew that I should know. Come, little woman. We both were lovers, more even than we knew, when we first met. [*He lifts the body, and suddenly drops it close to the wall, as he sees the light flash again, in the woods, hard by. He himself stands stiff, and close to a great tree, listening and watching. Enter through the woods the KAISER, flashing his light intermittently, as he comes.*]

KAISER.

Voices, voices, everywhere, and sights, and sights! [*Comes to the wall.*] What's this? [*Flashes his light, then climbs over the wall, and paces about the graveyard, flashing his light, now and again. Suddenly stops, and raises his hand, so that the light flashes on his face, and reveals a look of horror.*] A skull! . . . half-rotten. Answer me. Who are you? A Polish Russian prisoner? Ha! It had to be. You were weak as a nation. Weakness is vice. No, it's a crime. Strength is virtue. Germany was strong. Strong, I say, which means "God with us." God with us, we are conquering still. Your wife was ravished. What! You should have stayed at home and protected her. You should have been powerful, like us. We had "no right or reason," what! Ha,

ha! Power is reason, son of a Polish Count. You should have cultivated power. It is the great culture, the last *Kultur*, that conquers the whole world. [*Flashes his light on the ground again. Starts back and shakes.*] What, who are you? . . . you twisted mouth, and glassy eyes! Don't think you can outstare me. [*The light wobbles in his hand and reveals again his own horror-stricken face.*] What, a gentleman of France? It was a gallant nation, Monsieur. But it was too chivalrous to women. Your mothers should have borne three times as many sons. It was a vice, in other words a weakness, opposed to our great power. What, your mother's house was beaten down? She fled in the night rain? What, you were taken prisoner on the battle ground? You should have stayed with your Mamma. She should have borne a dozen sons. They are the nation's power. We were powerful. God helps those that help themselves. Can you read German? Do you know our motto: "*Gott mit uns*"? [*Paces on again. Suddenly flashes his light on YOLANDE.*] What, No! What, are my eyes out? [*Covers his eyes. Uncovers them again, and speaks after a moment.*] It is! Where have I seen you? Who are you? My soldiers don't kill women! They have too much power. My soldiers are strong men. I trained them so. They did not kill you! They wanted not your life. They would be ashamed to take your life. They could impose their will upon you, if need be. What is that you say? The power that weak women have, over strong men, because men cannot always overcome them, except by extermination? Extermination!

Ha! Belgium is slowly being exterminated. What is that you say? "Belgium is like a woman, Sire." You were a pretty woman. Yes . . . beautiful . . . and Belgium, too. [*Chimes ring. He starts back in a quake again.*] Ha, one tower not shaken down, by my big Berthas. Well . . . however, you did meet your death, it is wise to know that beauty is not power. And he that is without power, power will destroy. Beauty and Power! Hum. They are two separate qualities. [*Starts back suddenly at the sound of a flute, playing a Mozart air.*] What sights and sounds! Nothing but sounds and sights. [*Enter the ghost of FREDERICK THE GREAT, seen indistinctly, until the KAISER turns his flashlight on him. He is disclosed playing upon his flute. KAISER shakes, but stands erect.*] I know you. There's a painting of you with your flute, by old Pesne, in the grand gallery of the Potsdam Palace. What, have you finished playing? Don't tell me you, too, can talk!

FREDERICK.

[*Poising his flute in one hand, and taking snuff.*] A ravishing air.

KAISER.

What? I suppose so. There was a time, when I used to quote you, *verbatim*, but not about art. Although I am an artist and a poet.

FREDERICK.

You *did* quote me *verbatim*? And why not quote me now? Voltaire and I, between us, framed many a piquant epigram.

KAISER.

I have ceased to quote anyone but God.

FREDERICK.

A great mistake. Any child of six can be glib at quoting God, but a wise man often has need to quote the Devil. There was a saying of mine, now, that came through Voltaire from Machiavelli, and through Machiavelli straight from the Devil.

KAISER.

*Ach, so!* I know the saying. I often quoted it, in deed still more than in word. It was the saying that you had a hundred thousand excellent reasons (meaning your men under arms).

FREDERICK.

*Magnifique!* I see you have the historic sense.

KAISER.

[*With a long-drawn sigh.*] Oh, yes, I am a man of history, a man of many parts. I am afflicted with imagination.

FREDERICK.

Afflicted?

KAISER.

Yes, afflicted. Imagination is a good servant. I have proved it so. But, listen. [*In a hoarse whisper.*] It is a horrible master!

FREDERICK.

[*Poising his flute lightly.*] Ah! I see you have made another great mistake. I also have been credited with being a man of many parts. I was a poet in my day.

KAISER.

So am I.

FREDERICK.

Then you should play upon the flute. [*Poising his flute as if to play.*]

KAISER.

[*Covers his ears.*] Pray, don't begin that. I've heard enough tonight. The chimes in yonder tower tormented me, just now.

FREDERICK.

Oh, chimes! They always were a nuisance. But religion is necessary for keeping the common crowd in order.

KAISER.

For leading them about. I have never failed to make use of religion.

FREDERICK.

Indeed! Did you find it plausible?

KAISER.

To make it plausible, you must believe in it. I have always believed that God was at my right hand.

FREDERICK.

How interesting! It must have led you into extraordinary undertakings . . . more remarkable than capturing Silesia, thought to be a feat in its day.



KAISER.

It has led me into conflict with the world.

FREDERICK.

How stupendous! And you will conquer?

KAISER.

Of course.

FREDERICK.

I see. You think it is a small affair of the Almighty.

KAISER.

[*Holding up his fist.*] As God reigns, so reign I.

FREDERICK.

[*Taking snuff again.*] It must save you a great deal of anxiety. Now I used to be annoyed with insomnia.

KAISER.

Ach! So am I. That is why I am here. I am afflicted with insomnia . . . and imagination.

FREDERICK.

You are indeed a man of parts. How does your imagination work?

KAISER.

[*Half whispering.*] I see things, on the ground.

FREDERICK.

[*With a little laugh.*] Another great mistake, my friend. You should learn to play upon the flute.

KAISER.

No! No! Don't talk of that. I should see above the flute, and always things upon the ground.

FREDERICK.

How entertaining! What, now, do you see?

KAISER.

Ach! Everything. Did you see that flying squirrel flying by? Did you see it leap into the tree?

FREDERICK.

A thing of curious beauty. I used to collect them, in my Chinese ivory ware, at *Sans Souci*, in Potsdam. [*Musing.*] A thing of curious beauty.

KAISER.

That's it! . . . A thing of beauty. Why does it exist? The thought torments me.

FREDERICK.

Mistake, mistake, a great mistake to be thought-ridden. Learn Mozart on the flute.

KAISER.

God damn the flute. I tell you a man of thought must *think*.

FREDERICK.

Ah! Indeed! Pray, what do you think about?

KAISER.

I told you.

FREDERICK.

[*With aesthetic nicety, after looking meditatively at the KAISER.*] We were speaking of the curious beauty of the squirrel, whether in Chinese ivory, or in *specie naturae*, naked nature. A thing of curious beauty!

KAISER.

Yes, but—— [*Shakes his fist in FREDERICK'S face.*] But why does it exist?

FREDERICK.

[*With sudden complacency.*] Like the species Rat, I should suppose, it exists for its own glory.

KAISER.

For its own glory! But it has no power.

FREDERICK.

Quite true.

KAISER.

And if another powerful, predatory species, took it for its prey——

FREDERICK.

The species, Squirrel, would become extinct.

KAISER.

And if another still more powerful took the predatory species for its prey,—

FREDERICK.

Ah, yes. I see what you are trying to grasp. Man, being most powerful, would be the only species. And the most powerful nation, among men, in a *War à Outrance*, would wipe out all the rest.

KAISER.

Yes, yes.

FREDERICK.

You mean your Germans.

KAISER.

Yes.

FREDERICK.

And the most powerful party, in a political campaign à outrance, would wipe out the rest. And the most powerful man in the party would annihilate the rest . . . plain gobble them up.

KAISER.

Yes. Even were the rest his own son.

FREDERICK.

[*Waving his flute with a smile.*] And he would be left alone with his God, who, to follow the analogy, would gobble him up, as a cat does a rat . . . neither one of whom is supposed to have a soul. My friend, *don't think*. And if you, like me, would be called "the Great," don't lie to yourself. Learn, as I learned, to play upon the flute.

KAISER.

Come here! [*Motions to FREDERICK, who follows, as the KAISER leads him, to the feet of YOLANDE, looking curiously.*] Do you think a flute would help me here?

FREDERICK.

She also was a thing of beauty. Her white costume is half red. Did you do this piece of extermination?

KAISER.

Yes. And a thousand thousand more.

FREDERICK.

And you have not conquered yet?

KAISER.

No, it will take a thousand thousand more.

FREDERICK.

[*Seating himself on the wall, the flute poised in air.*]

A thousand thousand more? . . . for what?

KAISER.

To keep my Grab Bag in the East. Belgium is nothing.

FREDERICK.

It took ten years of war to keep my grabbings of Silesia. I fought the whole of Europe.

KAISER.

And I on top of all—America.

FREDERICK.

I made the snowfields red with blood.

KAISER.

And I . . . the oceans.

FREDERICK.

I taught that *Might makes Right*.

KAISER.

And I—I learned your teachings——

FREDERICK.

The Devil's platitude made readable by Machiavelli, made feasible by Voltaire, and unforgettable by me. I taught it to your Fatherland.

KAISER.

And I retaught it. We stamped the weak into the ground, and now—I only see the ground—the ground—and God!



FREDERICK.

My friend, you have not followed my teaching with complete attention. To *myself*, my friend, I never lied. I never called the Devil, God. Come, it's plain you need Mozart. [*Begins to play.*]

KAISER.

[*Strides toward him, and strikes the flute.*] I will not have your cursed flute. *Gott strafe* you. I have killed music in the world.

FREDERICK.

No. You have no power over me, or music that I play. [*Walks slowly away, playing his Mozart air.*]

KAISER.

[*Follows him with his searchlight, and after FREDERICK has vanished, the notes of the flute are still heard. He then turns the light around upon YOLANDE and walks toward her again.*] I've killed beauty, too. Your unborn Belgian children. . . . The world is angry over them . . . as well as over towers of Liege and Rheims. The world's not large enough for all of us, and so weak nations must expire. Yes, Falkenhayn, we have your Empire grabbed from the feeble East. And Germany shall have a Western Empire built on the feeble West; American women shall one day bring forth German

sons. What's done is done. And there's much, still, to do. You needn't rise to haunt me! There'll be many more of you! Down, I say, *down!* [*Stamps on the feet of YOLANDE. POET steps forth from the darkness into the moonlight.*]

POET.

If you cannot respect the dead, I'll make you fear the living, though you were Kaiser of the Universe.

KAISER.

[*Turns flashlight on the POET.*] Comrade, it is the dead I fear, more than the living. You, are you alive?

POET.

Alive to make you fear the living. Are you armed?

KAISER.

[*Starting and lifting his hands.*] No, *Kamerad*, I'm glad to hear a live man's voice again. Did you see sights, and hear sounds, in this wood and graveyard?

POET.

I saw you, and I heard you talking with the dead.

KAISER.

Tell me, did you see Frederick the Great, and hear him play his cursed flute?

POET.

I heard you talking with him, and I almost saw him, in my mind's eye. But I saw him, as Plato would say, before I was born. I am a dramatist by occupation, or I was, your Majesty, till you, to-night, turned me into a soldier.

KAISER.

How so? A dramatist? So, too, am I. I have imagination. It is a great incubus, imagination . . . *hein?* It's that, that makes me fear the dead, more than the living.

POET.

You do well, to fear them more. Heroic sacrifice! . . . it is the power that raised up the meekest of all men from a grave.

KAISER.

[*Peering forward.*] How so?

POET.

It is the Power that sent His twelve Apostles out to martyrs' deaths. It is the Power that arms the "Feeble" West against you. It is the Power that saves the frail-est of humanity from the clutches of all dominant tyranny. It is the Power that says you shall not snatch the Feeble East weak as a woman to resist you. It is the power that has compelled me to leave the pen for an American cannon.

KAISER.

[*Staring.*] How so?

POET.

Yes, to give up life and leave what's better to me than my life, unwritten, in order to lead men against you in a field where the best a man could do would be to kill you. I would do it now, if you were armed.

KAISER.

What have I done to you?

POET.

What have you done to this dead girl, and the whole peaceful world? Leave her body here to me for burial. Her soul and mine, and all I love, will fight till you and

yours are dead. [*Takes out his pistol.*] Go. [KAISER wavers.] You see you made a great mistake not to bring with you to this graveyard your hundred thousand reasons. [*Covers KAISER with pistol.* KAISER bows his head, and turns to go through the wall. He searches the woods as he goes along with his light.]

KAISER.

My hundred thousand reasons. [POET still covers him with his pistol.]

POET.

They shall wake up a sleeping America, your hundred thousand reasons. [*Chimes from the tower.*]

CURTAIN.

**SCENE:—***Darkness, sounds of distant gunfire and then—the dugout as before. Soldiers and the BANKER LIEUTENANT bear in the POET CAPTAIN, and give him first aid for a wound in the shoulder.*

**POET CAPTAIN.**

[*Feeling his breast, and speaking in a hoarse voice to the BANKER LIEUTENANT.*] Don't let her little white veil get bloody.

**BANKER LIEUTENANT.**

[*Searching the breast pockets of the POET CAPTAIN and taking out the envelope from which he extracts the veil.*] That's safe, old man, and you're safe, too. And your play poem is safe—just as you dreamed it. . . . Bet your life. I saw it in the German gas. Damn them! We've licked 'em once again all right. [POET CAPTAIN *gasps.*] Hold on, old man, I've got your Vision Dream stuff. And the damned reality. But you're not going . . . to die.

**POET CAPTAIN.**

[*Attempting to sit up.*] No, not yet. [*To ORDERLY.*] Bring in your prisoner that they say is the Kaiser.

ORDERLY.

We've got him here, sir. [*Exit by communication trench. He comes back instantly with a soldier and a German, ostensibly the KAISER in a long cloak and spiked helmet.*]

ORDERLY.

[*Saluting.*] He says he's a dummy, but I believe he's the Kaiser, sir.

POET CAPTAIN.

[*Stares at him, then staggers to his feet.*] Are you the Kaiser?

GERMAN.

No.

POET CAPTAIN.

[*Puts his hands over his eyes.*] I could have killed him, if he had had a pistol, and my pistol had been loaded. [*Uncovers his eyes.*] You don't deserve to live. In my State in America, they kill men for just one of your many crimes to women. Sometimes we get the wrong man, yes—too bad. But we take no chances. Americans you think are soft to women. Well, perhaps

they are. But they are the cruellest men in the world to criminals like you who outrage women. We'll take no chances with you. You *are* the Kaiser or you walk his ways and work his works. [*To ORDERLY.*] Take him. [*They lead him out.*] A hundred thousand reasons won't help you to keep your Eastern Empire. They won't help you against one helpless woman, and the American flag.

CURTAIN.





## EPILOGUE

*[Chimes and darkness, again revealing the Belfry in Berlin as before. The chimes continue, but without the answering voices of the children, as the two Spirits stand again armed and confronting each the other.]*

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

Again I meet thee dying.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Face to face.

SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

Thy hands again 'tis I have crucified,  
The hills heap higher which thy corpses trace,  
The valleys deepen where thy dead have died.

SPIRIT OF THE REED.

And still thou fearest those from graves who rose to  
guide.

## SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

My might hath made thy meekness desolate,  
Thine arches ashes and thine altars blood,  
I wound thy weakness with the worm as mate,  
My batteries blaze where all thy beacons stood.

## SPIRIT OF THE REED.

And still thou fearest me, my broken reed and rood.

*[Holds out the reed.]*

For in dead hands it hails a living host.  
Silent as sailing ships they swarm afar.  
And 'tis the dead they greet from coast to coast,  
The souls ye dumb'd—each sings a morning star.  
Yea, things ye thought were not shall silence things  
that are—  
My loftiest spire and my lowliest shrine—

## SPIRIT OF THE SWORD.

That I have fouled and daily desecrate,

## SPIRIT OF THE REED.

Is reared again with brighter beacon shine  
Beyond the outmost batteries of hate,  
A house not made with hands and peace shall keep  
its gate.

THE END.







**This book is under no circumstances to be  
taken from the Building**

[illegible]

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